

2026



AP[®] European History

Free-Response Questions

EUROPEAN HISTORY
SECTION I PART B
TIME – 40 MINUTES

Directions:

Section I, Part B has 3 short-answer questions and lasts 40 minutes.

In this part, answer Question 1 and Question 2 and **either** Question 3 **or** Question 4.

In your responses, be sure to address **all** parts of the questions you answer. Use complete sentences; an outline or bulleted list alone is not acceptable.

You may pace yourself as you answer the questions in this part, or you may use these optional timing recommendations:

It is suggested that you spend an equal amount of time, approximately 13 minutes, on each question.

You may use scratch paper for notes and planning, but credit will only be given for responses entered in this application. Text you enter as an annotation will **not** be included as part of your answer. You can go back and forth between questions in this part until time expires. The clock will turn red when 5 minutes remain—**the proctor will not give you any time updates or warnings.**

Note: This exam was originally administered digitally. It is presented here in a format optimized for teacher and student use in the classroom.

“In 1603...James VI, King of Scotland, took the throne of England, as James I.... Nine out of ten of James’s subjects lived in the countryside, mostly engaged in farming. The vast majority were illiterate.... Famine was a regular **scourge**, as was bubonic plague.... Population was growing, but the economy wasn’t developing in such a way as to cope, leading to a serious poverty problem with unemployment, plummeting wages and rocketing rents. Fear about witchcraft was at its height....

By the end of the century, a new world had arisen.... The great population rise had ended, but the economy kept growing: even laborers were earning more, and famine was now a thing of the past. Towns were reborn as social hubs...boasting coffee houses, theatres and concert halls. Trade was now the mainstay of economic life in a thriving market economy. Consumption was conspicuous and rampant.... Plague was gone. Executions were far less frequent. The witch trials were all but over....

In politics, too, so much had changed.... There were confident Parliaments, a vibrant and **turbulent** press, a split between two identifiable political parties and remarkable religious diversity. [The monarchs] were able to draw strength from a growing empire, but at home they had to contend with a newly confident public sphere and a politicized middle rank of people who enjoyed nothing more than discussing the latest news over a pipe of tobacco and a pot of coffee.”

Source: Jonathan Healey, British historian, *The Blazing World: A New History of Revolutionary England, 1603–1689*, published in 2023

scourge: something that causes great harm or destruction

turbulent: characterized by conflict or disorder

1. Respond to parts A, B, and C.

- A. Describe an argument that the author makes in the passage.
- B. Describe one piece of evidence from the passage that supports one of the author’s claims.
- C. Using a specific example, explain how the changes of the 1600s described by the author contributed to a political development in the period from 1648 to 1750.

Stanhope Forbes, *The Munitions Girls*, Oil Painting, 1918



History and Art Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

2. Respond to parts A, B, and C.

- A. Describe a relevant historical context for the painting.
- B. Describe one way that the painting depicts a change in European gender roles in the first half of the twentieth century.
- C. Using a specific example, explain how European women’s lives changed after 1950.

Answer either Question 3 or Question 4.

3. Respond to parts A, B, and C.

- A. Describe one feature of the Scientific Revolution.
 - B. Describe one similarity between the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution.
 - C. Using a specific example, explain how the Scientific Revolution affected European society during the period 1600 to 1800.
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4. Respond to parts A, B, and C.

- A. Describe one challenge to national unification movements in the period 1815 to 1848.
- B. Describe one similarity between the ways Italian unification and German unification were accomplished during the 1800s.
- C. Using a specific example, explain how Germany's unification led to the transformation of international relations within Europe after 1870.

END OF SECTION I

EUROPEAN HISTORY
SECTION II
TIME – 1 HOUR AND 40 MINUTES

Directions:

Section II has 1 document-based question (DBQ) and 1 long essay question, and lasts 1 hour and 40 minutes.

In this section, answer Question 1 (DBQ) and **either** Question 2 **or** Question 3 **or** Question 4. After reviewing Questions 2, 3, and 4, choose the question that you are best prepared to answer. This section of the exam requires answers in essay form. Use complete sentences; an outline or bulleted list alone is not acceptable.

You may pace yourself as you answer the questions in this section, or you may use these optional timing recommendations:

For Question 1 (DBQ), it is suggested that you spend approximately 15 minutes reading the question and planning your answer, and then 45 minutes writing your essay. The suggested writing time for the long essay question is 40 minutes.

You may use scratch paper for notes and planning, but credit will only be given for responses entered in this application. Text you enter as an annotation will **not** be included as part of your answer. You can go back and forth between questions in this section until time expires. The clock will turn red when 5 minutes remain—**the proctor will not give you any time updates or warnings.**

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1. Evaluate whether Peter the Great (reigned 1682 to 1725) or Catherine the Great (reigned 1762 to 1796) did more to transform Russia.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis or claim that establishes a line of reasoning.
- Describe a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.
- Support an argument in response to the prompt using at least four documents.
- Use at least one additional piece of specific historical evidence (beyond that found in the documents) relevant to an argument about the prompt.
- For at least two documents, explain how or why the document’s point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience is relevant to an argument.
- Demonstrate a complex understanding of a historical development related to the prompt through sophisticated argumentation and/or effective use of evidence.

Document 1

Source: Alexander Gordon, Scottish general who fought in the Russian army under Peter the Great in the early 1700s, *The History of Peter the Great, Emperor of Russia*, published in Scotland in 1755

“In the year 1703 the Tsar took the field early...and brought the army together; then marched and **invested** another small but important place, which surrendered on the 14th of May. The [favorable] situation of this place made the Tsar resolve to build on it a considerable town, with a strong **citadel**...and called it St. Petersburg,¹ which is now thought so strong that it will be scarcely possible for the Swedes ever to take it by force.... Two forts secure St. Petersburg from any **insult** by sea, and make it perhaps one of the best and safest harbors in the known world.... The work gave no small **umbrage** to the Swedes. In carrying materials for [the construction of St. Petersburg] there were upwards of eight thousand horses lost and nearly as many men.”

1: capital of Russia

invested: laid siege to

citadel: fortress

insult: attack

umbrage: anger

Document 2

Source: Peter the Great, “Decree on the Invitation of Foreigners,” 1702

“Since my accession to the throne all my efforts and intentions have tended to govern this realm in such a way that all of my subjects should, through my care for the general good, become more and more prosperous.... With this purpose I have been compelled to make some necessary and beneficial changes in the administration, in order that my subjects might more easily gain a knowledge of matters of which they were ignorant and might become more skillful in their commercial relations.

I have therefore given orders necessary for increasing our trade with foreigners, and shall do the same in the future....

To attain these worthy aims, I have endeavored to improve our military forces...so that our troops may consist of well-drilled men, maintained in perfect order and discipline. In order to obtain greater improvement in this respect, and to encourage foreigners, who are able to assist us in this way, as well as artisans profitable to the State, to come in numbers to our country, I have issued this [decree], and have ordered printed copies of it to be sent throughout Europe.

The free exercise of religion of all other sects, although not agreeing with our [Russian Orthodox] Church, is already allowed; the present decree reaffirms this freedom of worship. I, by the power granted to me by the Almighty, shall exercise no force over the consciences of men, and shall gladly allow every Christian to care for his own salvation at his own risk.”

Document 3

Source: Pierre-Philippe Chofard and Charles Monnet, *Allegory of the Empress Catherine II with the Text of 'Nakaz' ('Instructions')*, France, 1778



Album / Alamy Stock Photo

Catherine the Great (center right) is gesturing to a book that presents her new legal code, opened to the chapters on crime and punishment.

Allegory: symbolic representation

Document 4

Source: Count de Ségur, French ambassador to Russia, account of a 1785 tour of Russia with Catherine the Great, published in 1824

“In four or five days we arrived at the most elevated point of that vast territory, which extends from the North to the Black Sea.... From this spot, we saw the famous canals that convey the waters of several rivers...towards the Caspian Sea by way of the Volga River, or that convey to St. Petersburg the products of the South; a connection that enriches immense regions.

The works to form these canals and locks were planned and begun in the reign of Peter the Great, but his successors had neglected to carry this great and useful work to perfection. However, the Empress [Catherine] attended to it actively; the banks that had originally been made of wood, she reconstructed with stone...and conceived the plan of cutting two other canals, which will one day unite the Caspian with the Black Sea, and the Black Sea with the Baltic Sea.”

Document 5

Source: Francisco de Miranda, revolutionary from South America, diary entry of his tour of Russia, 1787

“The governor of the region...informed me that there are two establishments in this [province], as well as in others of the Empire, founded by the Empress [Catherine]: one, a facility for inoculations where this service is provided for free and for the [sick] children of the poor; they support them until the children are well. The other [establishment] is a free [public] school for the children of soldiers, which has 400 children in this town and 200 more throughout the [province]. And these types of schools [have more than] 20,000 children throughout the entire Empire. Oh, great Catherine!”

Document 6

Source: Prince Mikhail Shcherbatov, Russian philosopher and historian, *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia*, 1787

“Peter [the Great] established various gatherings where women, previously segregated from men, were present with them at entertainments.... It was pleasant for the ladies, who had previously been almost slaves in their own homes, to enjoy all the pleasures of society, to adorn themselves with clothes and fineries, which enhanced the beauty of their faces.

It also gave them no small pleasure to be able to see in advance [their future husbands] with whom they were to be joined for life, and that the faces of their husbands and betrothed were no longer covered with prickly beards.... It was pleasant for men who were young and not set in the old ways to mix freely with the ladies and to be able to see in advance and make the acquaintance of their brides-to-be; for previously they married, relying [only] on their parents' choice...

Women, previously unaware of their beauty, began to realize its power; they began to try to enhance it with suitable clothes, and used far more luxury in their adornments than their ancestors. Oh, how the desire to be pleasing acts upon women's senses!”

Document 7

Source: Princess Catherine Dashkova, the first female director of the Russian National Academy of Sciences, appointed in 1783 by Catherine the Great, memoir published in French in 1804

“I was employed in a work of such obvious benefit as the preparation of new and accurate maps of the provinces, the limits of which had never been laid down on paper since the late division of the empire. This new arrangement of so vast an empire into districts, the first systematic step towards the introduction of order and civilization throughout the interior, was a labor truly worthy of the great Catherine. The roads were consequently rendered safe and convenient. Inland commerce enabled new activity, and an increase of individual wealth was soon visible in the improvement of the towns.... But above all, the empress established judicial courts and a civil police in several districts, and thus ensured public confidence and security; blessings quite different from what had previously existed, [when people] traveled [vast distances] in search of justice.”

Answer Question 2 or Question 3 or Question 4.

In your response, you should do the following.

- Respond to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis or claim that establishes a line of reasoning.
 - Describe a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.
 - Support an argument in response to the prompt using at least two pieces of specific and relevant evidence.
 - Use historical reasoning (e.g., comparison, causation, continuity or change over time) to frame or structure an argument that addresses the prompt.
 - Demonstrate a complex understanding of a historical development related to the prompt through sophisticated argumentation and/or effective use of evidence.
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2. Evaluate the most significant cause of changes in traditional social hierarchies in Europe during the period 1450 to 1600.

3. Evaluate the most significant effect of governmental responses to industrialization in the 1800s.

4. Evaluate the most significant effect of the First World War on international relations within Europe.

**STOP
END OF EXAM**