

Essay Writing Tips for APUSH

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Revising: L.J. Fisher (1992), M. Davis (2002), R. Richardson (2011) with additions from John High (2018)

U.S. History Essay Writing Information

The AP U.S. History Exam is three hours and five minutes long. In Section I, students are given 10 minutes to answer 50 multiple-choice questions. In Section II, students are given a 45-minute period to be used for historical analysis (the document-based question or DBQ), which includes a 15-minute reading period. From students select 2 other essays to write on. Each essay will be from the first half of the course. No other will be from the second half of the course.

	% of Grade	Number of Questions	Time Allocated	Reading Period
Section I	40%	50	10 minutes	
Section II	60%	3 Essay Questions		
Part A	20%	1 DBQ Essay	40 minutes	15 minutes
Part B	15%	1 FRQ Essay	30 minutes	5 minutes
Part C	25%	1 FRQ Essay	30 minutes	5 minutes

AP United States History Exam – Writing Requirement

Part A: Document-Based Question (DBQ) Essay

Part B: Free-Response Question (FRQ) from the 1st half of the course

Part C: Free-Response Question (FRQ) from the 2nd half of the course

DO!

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO WRITE A GOOD ESSAY ON A TOPIC ABOUT WHICH YOU KNOW NOTHING.

The three essays on the AP exam count 60% of your score. They will not be successful on the exam if you cannot write quality essays, and quality essays require historical knowledge.

WRITING FOR HISTORY

First of all, remember your **AUDIENCE**. You are writing for History teachers and historians.

One of the first things students must realize is that people change the way they communicate based on their audience. The rubrics given here are for writing about history in college. It may be different from what you learn in English.

How to tackle the essay prompts for HISTORY

1. Read the question or prompt carefully. The basic purpose is to answer the question. Read the question **slowly** and be able to paraphrase the question and know the essential task demanded by it. Rereading the question will be the central theme of your essay. Many essay prompts will "suggest" a particular format to follow for organizing your response. Create a framework or template for answering the question.

- Break the question down with dates, points, and facts. Make sure you are aware of the entire question.
- Be careful of the verb – what exactly are you supposed to do? Be sure that you understand the required task.
- Look for words that need defining words like "effective" (successful, positive, important, etc).
- Look for ways to answer the question in a sophisticated manner. Not with a simple yes or no, or right or wrong. - It is more comfortable to deal with such and other, so historians do that best to best of the job.
- Look for multiple points of view.

2. Brainstorm on paper everything that comes to mind regarding the topic of hand. What do you know about the topic? Put this down on paper to get your brain in gear for writing the essay.

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