

1973–2008 DBQ Essay Questions (by Historical Era)

Colonial and Revolutionary America

1993 Although New England and the Chesapeake region were both settled largely by people of English origin, by 1700 the regions had evolved into two distinct societies. Why did this difference in development occur?

2004 In what ways did the French and Indian War (1754-63) alter the political, economic and ideological relations between Britain and its American colonies. Use the documents and your knowledge of the period 1740-1766 in constructing your answer.

1999 To what extent had the colonists developed a sense of their identity and unity as Americans by the eve of the Revolution? Use the documents and your knowledge of the period 1750-1776 to answer the question.

1976 Was American society, as evidenced by Wethersfield, Connecticut, becoming more "democratic" in the period from 1750's to the 1780's? Discuss with reference to property distribution, social structure, politics, and religion.

2005 To what extent did the American Revolution fundamentally change American society? In your answer be sure to address the political, social and economic effects of the Revolution in the period from 1775 to 1800.

The New Nation

1985 "From 1781 to 1789 the Articles of Confederation provided the United States with an effective government." Using the documents and your knowledge of the period, evaluate this statement.

1977 The debate over the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 revealed bitter controversies on a number of issues. Discuss the issues involved and explain why these controversies developed.

1998 With respect to the federal Constitution, the Jeffersonian Republicans are usually characterized as strict constructionists who were opposed to the broad constructionism of the Federalists. To what extent was this characterization of the two parties accurate during the presidencies of Jefferson and Madison?
In writing your answer, use the documents and your knowledge of the period 1801–1817.

Antebellum America

2002b Historians have traditionally labeled the period after the War of 1812 the "Era of Good Feelings." Evaluate the accuracy of this label, considering the emergence of nationalism and sectionalism.
Use the documents and your knowledge of the period 1815–1825 to construct your answer.

1990 Jacksonian Democrats view themselves as the guardians of the United States Constitution, political democracy, individual liberty, and equality of economic opportunity. In light of the following documents and your knowledge of the 1820's and 1830's, to what extent do you agree with Jacksonian's view of themselves?

1980 "The Decision of the Jackson Administration to remove the Cherokee Indians to lands west of the Mississippi River in the 1830's was more a reformulation of the national policy that had been in effect since the 1790's than a change in that policy." Assess the validity of this generalization with reference to the moral, political, constitutional, and practical concerns that shaped national Indian policy between 1789 and the mid-1830's.

2002 "Reform movements in the United States sought to expand democratic ideals." Assess the validity of this statement with specific reference to the years 1825–1850.

2006 Discuss the changing ideals of American womanhood between the American Revolution (1770's) and the outbreak of the Civil War. What factors fostered the emergence of a "republican motherhood" and the "cult of domesticity"? Assess the extent to which these ideals influenced the lives of women during this period. In your answer be sure to consider issues of race and class.

1981 How and why did the lives and status of Northern middle-class women change between 1776 and 1876?

The Road To Civil War and Its Aftermath

2005b In the early nineteenth century, Americans sought to resolve their political disputes through compromise, yet by 1860 this no longer seemed possible. Analyze the reasons for this change. Use the documents and your knowledge of the years 1820–1860 in constructing your response.

1987 "By the 1850's the Constitution, originally framed as an instrument of national unity, had become a source of sectional discord and tension and ultimately contributed to the failure of the union it had created." Using the documents and your knowledge of the period 1850–1861, assess the validity of this statement.

1982 John Brown's raid on the federal armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in October 1859, involved only a handful of abolitionists, freed no slaves, and was over in two days. Although many Northerners condemned the raid, by 1863 John Brown had become hero and martyr in the North. To what extent and in what ways do the views about John Brown expressed in the documents illustrate changing North-South relations between 1859 and 1863?

1974 To what extent was President-elect Abraham Lincoln responsible for the defeat of the Crittenden proposal on the territorial expansion of slavery?

1996 In what ways and to what extent did constitutional and social developments between 1860 and 1877 amount to a revolution?

The Gilded Age

1979 To what extent and for what reasons did the policies of the federal government from 1865 to 1900 violate the principles of laissez-faire, which advocated minimal government intervention in the economy? Consider with specific reference to the following three areas of policy: railroad land grants, control of interstate commerce, and antitrust activities.

2007 Analyze the ways in which government policy, technology, and economic conditions changed American agriculture in the period 1865–1900. In your answer, be sure to evaluate farmers' responses to these changes.

2000 How successful was organized labor in improving the position of workers in the period from 1875–1900? Analyze the factors that contributed to the level of success achieved.

1992 To what extent did the natural environment shape the development of the West beyond the Mississippi and the lives of those who lived and settled there? How important were other factors?

Use both evidence from the documents and your knowledge of the period from the 1840's to the 1890's to compose your answer.

1983 Documents A-H reveal some of the problems that many farmers in the late nineteenth century (1880–1900) saw as threats to their way of life. Using the documents and your knowledge of the period, (a) explain the reasons for agrarian discontent and (b) evaluate the validity of the farmers' complaints.

The Turn of the Century and Progressivism

1994 To what extent was late nineteenth-century and early twentieth century United States expansionism a continuation of past United States expansionism and to what extent was it a departure? Use the documents and your knowledge of United States history to 1914 to construct your answer.

1975 Analyze the factors that influenced the Senate in ratifying the Treaty of Paris in 1899 and assess their relative significance. Your analysis and assessment should take into account the complexities and/or contradictions presented by the evidence.

1989 Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois offered different strategies for dealing with the problems of poverty and discrimination faced by Black Americans at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Using the documents and your knowledge of the period 1877–1915, assess the appropriateness of each of these strategies in the historical context in which each was developed.

2003b Evaluate the effectiveness of Progressive Era reformers and the federal government in bringing about reform at the national level. In your answer be sure to analyze the successes and limitations of these efforts in the period 1900–1920.

1978 In the twentieth century prohibition spread by states' passing local option laws, which permitted a unit of local government, such as a county, to prohibit the sale or consumption of alcoholic beverages. After an intensive campaign by the Anti-Saloon League and other prohibitionist organizations and reform groups, national prohibition was achieved by the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment to the federal Constitution in 1919. What accounts for the success of the Prohibition movement in the United States during the era of progressive reform, 1900–1919? Consider the social composition of the prohibitionists, strategy and pressure-group tactics, and the relationship of prohibitionism to progressive reform.

1991 It was the strength of the opposition forces, both liberal and conservative, rather than the ineptitude and stubbornness of President Wilson that led to the Senate defeat of the Treaty of Versailles. Using the documents and your knowledge of the period 1917–1921, assess the validity of this statement.

1997 To what extent did economic and political developments as well as assumptions about the nature of women affect the position of American women during the period 1890–1925?

2008b For the years 1880 to 1925, analyze both the tensions surrounding the issue of immigration and the United States government's response to these tensions.

The Roaring Twenties, Great Depression, and World War II

1973 Relying on a critical evaluation of the accompanying documents, analyze the factors that probably influenced Congress to pass the Immigration Act of 1924.

1986 The 1920's were a period of tension between new and changing attitudes on the one hand and traditional values and nostalgia on the other. What led to the tension between old and new AND in what ways was the tension manifested?

1984 President Franklin D. Roosevelt is commonly thought of as a liberal and President Herbert C. Hoover as a conservative. To what extent are these characteristics valid?

2003 Analyze the responses of Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration to the problems of the Great Depression. How effective were these responses? How did they change the role of the federal government? Use the documents and your knowledge of the period 1929–1941 to construct your answer.

2004b How and for what reasons did United States foreign policy change between 1920 and 1941?

World War II to the Present

1988 The United States decision to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima was a diplomatic measure calculated to intimidate the Soviet Union in the post-Second-World-War era rather than a strictly military measure designed to force Japan's unconditional surrender. Evaluate this statement using the documents and your knowledge of the military and diplomatic history of the years 1939 through 1947.

2006b Analyze developments from 1941–1949 that increased suspicion and tension between the United States and the Soviet Union.

2001 What were the Cold War fears of the American people in the aftermath of the Second World War? How successfully did the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower address these fears? Use the documents and your knowledge of the years 1948–1961 to construct your response.

1995 Analyze the changes that occurred during the 1960's in the goals, strategies, and support of the movement for African American civil rights.

2007b In what ways did the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson respond to the political, economic, and social problems of the United States? Assess the effectiveness of the response. Use the documents and your knowledge of the years 1960–1970 to construct your response.

2008 Analyze the ways in which the Vietnam War heightened social, political, and economic tensions in the United States. Focus your answer on the period 1964 to 1975.