

THEMATIC ESSAY | Teacher's Guide

According to the [State of New York](#), there are 20 themes that are found amongst the curriculum guides & suggested content for the New York State US History & Government course. The twenty themes are as follows:

Change	Citizenship	Culture & Intellectual Life	Immigration and Migration	Places and Regions
Civic Values	Constitutional Principles	Diversity	Individuals, Groups, Institutions	Reform Movements
Environment	Factors of Production	Government	Interdependence	Presidential Actions
Economic Systems	Foreign Policy	Human Systems	Physical Systems	Science and Technology

Of those twenty themes, **SEVEN** have **never been asked about or referenced** before on the thematic essay. They are as follows:

Citizenship
Civic Values
Culture & Intellectual Life
Factors of Production
Human Systems
Interdependence
Physical Systems

The three most popular themes to be asked about or referenced by the thematic essay task are:

Foreign Policy
Change
Government

Examples of these questions are on the following pages

Click on the links above to view thematic essay questions for the three most popular themes

Government:

January 2015 - Government Legislation:

- Select two pieces of legislation passed by the United States Congress and for each:
 - Describe the historical circumstances that led to the passage of the legislation
 - Discuss the impact of the law on the United States and/or on American society
You may use any congressional legislation that was intended to address an important issue.
 - *Some suggestions you might wish to consider include:*
 - Missouri Compromise (1820)
 - Wagner Act/National Labor Relations Act (1935)
 - Fugitive Slave Act (1850)
 - Interstate Highway Act (1956)
 - Homestead Act (1862)
 - Civil Rights Act (1964)
 - Meat Inspection Act (1906)
 - Title IX of the Education Amendments (1972)
 - Federal Reserve Act (1913)
 - North American Free Trade Agreement (1992)

January 2013 - Government Legislation:

- Select two laws passed by the United States Congress and for each:
 - Discuss the historical circumstances that led to the passage of the law
 - Discuss the impacts of the law on American society
 - You may use any federal law that was intended to address an important issue from your study of United States history
 - *Some suggestions you might wish to consider include:*
 - Embargo Act (1807)
 - Pure Food and Drug Act (1906)
 - Indian Removal Act (1830)
 - Social Security Act (1935)
 - Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854)
 - GI Bill/Servicemen's Readjustment Act (1944)
 - Interstate Commerce Act (1887)
 - Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)

August 2009 - Government - Supreme Court Decisions

- Select two Supreme Court cases that have had an impact on American society and for each:
 - Describe the historical circumstances surrounding the case
 - Explain the Supreme Court's decision in the case
 - Discuss an impact this decision has had on American society
 - You may use any appropriate Supreme Court case from your study of United States history
 - Some suggestions you might wish to consider include:
 - Worcester v. Georgia (1832)
 - Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857)
 - Northern Securities Co. v. United States (1904)
 - Korematsu v. United States (1944)
 - Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)
 - Heart of Atlanta Motel v. United States (1964)
 - Miranda v. Arizona (1966)
 - Roe v. Wade (1973)
 - United States v. Nixon (1974).

Additional Government Thematic Essay Questions:

- [August 2008 - Government Role in the Economy](#)
- [January 2007 - Influence of Geographical Features on Government Actions](#)
- [June 2004 - Geography & US Government Action](#)
- [January 2018 - US Government Actions](#)
- [August 2017 - Presidential Action](#)

Change:

June 2014 - Change - The Supreme Court

- Select two United States Supreme Court decisions that have had a significant impact on American society and for each:
 - Describe the historical circumstances surrounding the case
 - Explain the Court's decision in the case
 - Discuss the impact of the decision on the United States and/or on American society
 - You may use any Supreme Court decision from your study of United States history
 - *Some suggestions you might wish to consider include:*
 - Worcester v. Georgia (1832)
 - Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857)
 - Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)
 - Schenck v. United States (1919)
 - Korematsu v. United States (1944)
 - Engel v. Vitale (1962)
 - Miranda v. Arizona (1966)
 - New York Times v. United States (1971)
 - Roe v. Wade (1973)
 - United States v. Nixon (1974)

June 2011 - Change - Constitutional Amendments

- Select two constitutional amendments that have changed American society and for each:
 - Describe the historical circumstances that led to the adoption of the amendment
 - Discuss the political, social, and/or economic changes the amendment brought to American society
 - You may use any constitutional amendments that have changed American society
 - *Some suggestions you might wish to consider include:*
 - 13th amendment (abolition of slavery, 1865)
 - 17th amendment (direct election of senators, 1913)
 - 18th amendment (Prohibition, 1919)
 - 19th amendment (women's suffrage, 1920)
 - 22nd amendment (presidential term limits, 1951)
 - 24th amendment (elimination of the poll tax, 1964)
 - 26th amendment (suffrage for 18-year-old citizens, 1971).

June 2008 - Change

- Select two important individuals, other than presidents, and the area in which they tried to bring about change, and for each:
 - Discuss one action taken by the individual that led to changes in the nation's economy, government, or society
 - Discuss changes that came about as a result of the individual's action
 - You may use any important person from your study of United States history (other than a president)
 - Some suggestions you might wish to consider include:
 - Frederick Douglass and slavery
 - Andrew Carnegie and industrialization
 - Jacob Riis and urban life
 - Upton Sinclair and consumer protection
 - Henry Ford and the automobile industry
 - Margaret Sanger and reproductive right
 - Martin Luther King Jr. and civil rights
 - Cesar Chavez and migrant farmworkers
 - Bill Gates and the software industry

Additional Change Thematic Essay Questions:

- [January 2008 - Change - War](#)
- [June 2007 - Change - Industrialization](#)
- [June 2006 - Change - Turning Points](#)
- [June 2015 - Change - Organizations](#)
- [June 2017 - Change - Post WWII US](#)

Foreign Policy:

August 2013 - Foreign Policy (Cold War)

- Select two specific actions taken by the United States to limit the expansion of communism during the Cold War and for each:
 - Describe the historical circumstances that led to the action
 - Discuss the extent to which the action was successful in limiting the expansion of communism
 - You may use any action taken by the United States to limit the expansion of communism during the Cold War
 - *Some suggestions you might wish to consider include:*
 - The implementation of the Marshall Plan (1947–1952)
 - The establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] (1949)
 - Intervention in Korea (1950–1953)
 - Blockade of Cuba (1962)
 - Escalation of the Vietnam War (1964–1973)
 - Visit of President Richard Nixon to China (1972)
 - Pursuit of the Strategic Defense Initiative [SDI] (1983–1989)

June 2013 - Foreign Policy - National Interests

- Select two military and/or economic foreign policy actions taken by the United States to protect its national interests and for each:
 - Describe the historical circumstances that led to the action
 - Discuss the extent to which this action was successful in protecting the national interests
 - You may use any military and/or economic foreign policy action taken by the United States to protect its national interests
 - *Some suggestions you might wish to consider include:*
 - fighting the Mexican-American War (1846–1848)
 - declaring war on Spain (1898)
 - implementing the Open Door Policy (1899)
 - building the Panama Canal (1904–1914)
 - carrying out the Marshall Plan (1947–1952)
 - confronting the Soviets during the Cuban missile crisis (1962)
 - fighting the Vietnam War (1964–1973)
 - fighting the Persian Gulf War (1990–1991)

June 2012 - US Foreign Policy

- Select two presidential foreign policy decisions and for each:
 - Describe the historical circumstances surrounding the decision
 - Discuss an impact of the decision on the United States
 - Discuss an impact of the decision on another country or region
 - You may use any presidential foreign policy decision that dealt with an international problem from your study of United States history
 - *Some suggestions you might wish to consider include:*
 - James K. Polk sending troops to the Rio Grande (1846)
 - William McKinley deciding to annex the Philippines (1898)
 - Woodrow Wilson asking for a declaration of war (1917)
 - Harry Truman deciding to use the atomic bomb (1945)
 - John F. Kennedy quarantining Cuba (1962)
 - Lyndon B. Johnson sending combat troops to Vietnam (1965–1968)
 - Richard Nixon improving relations with China (1972)
 - George H. W. Bush sending troops to Kuwait (1990–1991)
 - George W. Bush sending troops to Iraq (2003)

Additional Foreign Policy Thematic Essay Questions:

- [January 2005 - Foreign Policy](#)
- [August 2003 - Foreign Policy](#)
- [August 2015 - Foreign Policy](#)
- [January 2016 - Foreign Policy](#)