

SHORT ANSWER (SAQ) GUIDE

AP History Exams



4 Questions 50 Minutes

About 12 minutes per question (48 minutes)

20%
of your exam score



YOU'VE GOT TIME. TAKE IT.

The SAQ section is the ONLY part of the exam where you will not be pressed for time. There is plenty of time to complete the required tasks, so don't rush through it. Use your time to plan and construct thoughtful answers.

WHAT THE SHORT ANSWER SECTION IS NOT:

- **This is NOT an essay.** It is simply a series of formulaic tasks that can each be completed by writing three complete sentences.
- **This is NOT about right vs. wrong answers, but about valid vs. invalid answers.** The part of the test where you are searching for a single correct answer is OVER. From now on, there are only two types of answers: those that are backed by sound argument and evidence and those that are not. When you are given options, none of the options will be any more valid or invalid than the others. Make sure that you understand what the question is asking, and answer the question directly providing valid evidence and analysis to support your answer.

THE FORMAT OF THE SHORT ANSWER SECTION:

- Each of the four questions will be divided into 2-3 tasks labeled a, b, (c - if applicable).
- Each of these lettered items will be graded separately, so approach each lettered task individually as a separate, but related task (skip a line in between each task).
- Before completing any tasks, look at all of the tasks so that you have a feel for the big picture.

PREWRITING:

It is critical that you make notes and plan your response. Brainstorming is helpful in bringing life to skeletal prompts.

ANSWER USING THIS THREE SENTENCE FORMAT:



- A** Clearly **ANSWER** the question.
- C** **CITE** a specific piece of evidence to support your answer. *The more specific, the better.*
- E** **EXPAND** your answer by providing further analysis or historical context.

MORE WORDS OF ADVICE:

- The questions don't have to be completed in order. Start in your comfort zone with the question you find easiest to answer and save the most difficult question(s) for last.
- Answer the question **DIRECTLY**. Don't beat around the bush or try to dress up your answers.
- If the question asks for **ONE** piece of evidence, there are no extra points for giving more than that.
- Each task is graded separately. If you can do A but not B or A and B but not C, then **GO FOR IT!** *In order to pass, you only have to earn half of the points in this section. **DON'T PANIC!***
- It's okay not to know everything. If you're given three choices and you have to choose two, it's okay if you have no idea about one of them (since there are no right or wrong answers).

SAMPLE AP HISTORY SAQ PROMPTS

These prompts, while having nothing to do with your exam, are phrased in a similar manner as those that will be on your exam.

SAMPLE SAQ PROMPT 1:

1. Using your knowledge of [Tom Richey's YouTube channel](#), answer parts a and b.
 - a) Briefly explain why ONE of the following videos represents Tom Richey's best video. Provide at least ONE piece of evidence to support your explanation.
 - The one about the most awesome king that France ever had.
 - The one comparing a dictator and a contemporary billionaire politician.
 - The one comparing the political ideologies of two American founders.
 - b) Briefly explain why ONE of the other options is not as persuasive as the one you chose.

NOTE: *The language of the options is worded in a very vague manner so that you will have to associate the vague description with something you already know. In this example, a theoretical student would need to associate the vague descriptions with my videos about Louis XIV, Trump and Hitler, and Jefferson vs. Hamilton.*

SAMPLE PROMPT 2:



Courtesy of tomrichey.net

2. Use the image to answer parts a, b, and c.
 - a) Briefly explain how this image represents ONE of the following.
 - Academic Excellence
 - Total Awesomeness
 - Shameless Self-Promotion
 - b) Briefly explain ONE way that this image could impact your AP exam score.
 - c) Briefly explain ONE way in which factors independent of this image could impact your AP exam score.

NOTE: *None of these choices is more correct or incorrect than the others. All are equally valid choices if supported by valid evidence.*

For more instructional materials, visit tomrichey.net.

SAMPLE SAQ PROMPT 3:

Use your knowledge to answer all parts of the question that follows.

3. AP teachers have debated the role of a student's individual efforts in success on AP exams.
 - a) Identify one student's situation and explain ONE way that this situation would support the argument that a student's individual efforts are the most important determinant of AP success.
 - b) Identify one student's situation and explain ONE way that this situation would undermine the argument that a student's individual efforts are the most important determinant of AP success.

NOTE: *There are arguments here for both sides of the proposition. Your job is to find evidence to present an argument for each side and analyze that evidence in a way that shows that the evidence supports the argument.*

SAMPLE SAQ PROMPT 4:

Use the passages below to answer all parts of the question that follows.

Source 1

Fraudulent schemes come in all shapes and sizes. To work, they typically wear a patina of respectability. That's the case with Advanced Placement courses, one of the great frauds currently perpetrated on American high-school students.... The College Board earns over half of all its revenues from its Advanced Placement program -- more than all its other revenue streams (SATs, SAT subject tests, PSATs) combined. The College Board's profits for 2009, the most recent year for which records were available, were 8.6 percent of revenue, which would be respectable even for a for-profit corporation. "When a non-profit company is earning those profits, something is wrong," says Americans for Educational Testing Reform.

John Tierney, Retired Government Professor and Writer, 2012

Source 2

I get pretty tired of [people calling AP courses a scam]. Should College Board not make money for what it does? There is a marketplace. If people don't like the AP courses, well they are not being forced to take them. This smells like just another attack on an institution because it is an institution. From where I sit, the classes represent increased rigor over what is typically offered at my school. It also gives my kids a chance to measure how they stack up against kids across the nation and I like that competitive aspect. Using the word scam irritates the hell out of me, now that I think about it. There are many scams out there but this is not one of them.

Keith Neal, AP History Teacher, 2016

4.
 - a) Explain one major difference between Tierney's and Neal's views about the College Board.
 - b) Provide one piece of evidence from a student's academic experience that supports Tierney's interpretation (Source 1) and explains HOW it supports the interpretation.
 - c) Provide one piece of evidence from a student's academic experience that supports Neal's interpretation (Source 2) and explains HOW it supports the interpretation.

NOTE: *Again, two views are presented and neither one is presented as being any more valid than the other. Your job is to provide valid evidence to support each position in turn.*