

THEMATIC ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS BY UNIT

Unit One: 1492 – 1607: Pre-Columbian to Early Colonization

Identity:	How did the identities of colonizing and indigenous American societies change as a result of contact in the Americas?
Work, Exchange, and Technology:	How did the Columbian Exchange—the mutual transfer of material goods, commodities, animals, and diseases—affect interaction between Europeans and natives and among indigenous peoples in North America?
Peopling:	Where did different groups settle in the Americas (before contact) and how and why did they move to and within the Americas (after contact)?
Politics and Power:	How did Spain’s early entry into colonization in the Caribbean, Mexico, and South America shape European and American developments in this period?
America in the World:	How did European attempts to dominate the Americas shape relations between Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans?
Environment and Geography:	How did pre-contact populations of North America relate to their environments? How did contact with Europeans and Africans change these relations in North America?
Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture:	How did cultural contact challenge the religious and other values systems of peoples from the Americas, Africa, and Europe?

Unit Two: 1608 - 1754: The Colonial Period

Identity:	What were the chief similarities and differences among the development of English, Spanish, Dutch, and French colonies in America?
Work, Exchange, and Technology:	How did distinct economic systems, most notably a slavery system based on African labor, develop in British North America? What was their effect on emerging cultural and regional differences?
Peopling:	Why did various colonists go to the New World? How did the increasing integration of the Atlantic world affect the movement of peoples between its different regions?
Politics and Power:	In what ways did the British government seek to exert control over its American colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries?
America in the World:	How did the competition between European empires around the world affect relations among the various peoples in North America?
Environment and Geography:	How and why did the English North American colonies develop into distinct regions?
Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture:	How did the expansion of cultural contact that took place with permanent colonization alter conditions in North America and affect intellectual and religious life, the growth of trade, and the shape of political institutions?

Unit Three: 1754 - 1800: A New Country is Born

Identity:	How did different social group identities evolve during the revolutionary struggle? How did leaders of the new United States attempt to form a national identity?
Work, Exchange, and Technology:	How did the newly independent United States attempt to formulate a national economy?
Peopling:	How did the revolutionary struggle and its aftermath reorient white-American Indian relations and affect subsequent population movements?
Politics and Power:	How did the ideology behind the revolution affect power relationships between different ethnic, racial, and social groups?
America in the World:	How did the revolution become an international conflict involving competing European and American powers?
Environment and Geography:	How did the geographical and environmental characteristics of regions opened up to white settlement after 1763 affect their subsequent development?
Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture:	Why did the patriot cause spread so quickly among the colonists after 1763? How did the republican ideals of the revolutionary cause affect the nation's political culture after independence?

Unit Four: 1800 - 1848: Jefferson and Jackson

Identity:	How did debates over American democratic culture and the proximity of many different cultures living in close contact affect changing definitions of national identity?
Work, Exchange, and Technology:	How did the growth of mass manufacturing in the rapidly urbanizing North affect definitions of and relationships between workers, and those for whom they worked? How did the continuing dominance of agriculture and the slave system affect southern social, political, and economic life?
Peopling:	How did the continued movement of individuals and groups into, out of, and within the United States shape the development of new communities and the evolution of old communities?
Politics and Power:	How did the growth of ideals of mass democracy, including such concerns as expanding suffrage, public education, abolitionism, and care for the needy affect political life and discourse?
America in the World:	How did the United States use diplomatic and economic means to project its power in the western hemisphere? How did foreign governments and individuals describe and react to the new American nation?
Environment and Geography:	How did environmental and geographic factors affect the development of sectional economics and identities?
Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture:	How did the idea of democratization shape and reflect American arts, literature, ideals, and culture?

Unit Five: 1844 - 1877: Antebellum to Reconstruction

Identity:	How did migration to the United States change popular ideas of American Identity and citizenship as well as regional and racial identities? How did the conflicts that led to the Civil War change popular ideas about national, regional, and racial identities throughout this period?
Work, Exchange, and Technology:	How did the maturing of northern manufacturing and the adherence of the South to an agricultural economy change the national economic system by 1877?
Peopling:	How did the growth of mass migration to the United States and the railroad affect settlement patterns in cities and the West?
Politics and Power:	Why did attempts at compromise before the war fail to prevent the conflict? To what extent, and in what ways, did the Civil War and Reconstruction transform American political and social relationships?
America in the World:	How was the American conflict over slavery part of larger global events?
Environment and Geography:	How did the end of slavery and technological and military developments transform the environment and settlement patterns in the South and the West?
Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture:	How did the doctrine of Manifest Destiny affect debates over territorial expansionism and the Mexican War? How did the Civil War struggle shape Americans' beliefs about equality, democracy, and national destiny?

Unit Six: 1865 - 1898: Urbanization and the Jim Crow South

Identity:	How did the rapid influx of immigrants from other parts of the world than northern and western Europe affect debates about American national identity?
Work, Exchange, and Technology:	How did technological and corporate innovations help to vastly increase industrial production? What was the impact of these innovations on the lives of working people?
Peopling:	How and why did the sources of migration to the United States change dramatically during this period?
Politics and Power:	How did the political culture of the Gilded Age reflect the emergence of new corporate power? How successful were the challenges to this power? Why did challenges to this power fail?
America in the World:	How did the search for new global markets affect American foreign policy and territorial ambitions?
Environment and Geography:	In what ways, and to what extent, was the West "opened" for further settlement through connection to eastern political, financial, and transportation systems?
Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture:	How did artistic and intellectual movements both reflect and challenge the emerging corporate order?

Unit Seven: 1890 - 1945: The Great American Empire

Identity:	How did continuing debates over immigration and assimilation reflect changing ideals of national and ethnic identity? How did class identities change in this period?
Work, Exchange, and Technology:	How did movements for political and economic reform take shape in this period, and how effective were they in achieving their goals?
Peopling:	Why did public attitudes towards immigration become negative during this time period? How and why did people migrate within the U.S. during this time period?
Politics and Power:	How did reformist ideals change as they were taken up by reformers in different time periods? Why did opposition emerge to various reform programs?
America in the World:	Why did U.S. leaders decide to become involved in global conflicts such as the Spanish American War, World War I, and World War II? How did debates over intervention reflect public views of America's role in the world?
Environment and Geography:	Why did reformers seek for the government to wrest control of the environment and national resources from commercial interests?
Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture:	How did "modern" cultural values evolve in response to developments in technology? How did debates over the role of women in American public life reflect changing social realities?

Unit Eight: 1945 - 1980: The Cold War

Identity:	How did the African-American Civil Rights movement affect the development of other movements based on asserting the rights of different groups in American society? How did American involvement in the Cold War affect debates over American national identity?
Work, Exchange, and Technology:	How did the rise of American manufacturing and global economic dominance in the years after World War II affect standards of living among and opportunities for different social groups?
Peopling:	How did the growth of migration to and within the United States influence demographic change and social attitudes in the nation?
Politics and Power:	How did the changing fortunes of liberalism and conservatism in these years affect broader aspects of social and political power?
America in the World:	Why did Americans endorse a new engagement in international affairs during the Cold War? How did this belief change over time in response to particular events?
Environment and Geography:	Why did public concern about the state of the natural environment grow during this period, and what major changes in public policy did this create?
Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture:	How did changes in popular culture reflect or cause changes in social attitudes? How did the reaction to these changes affect political and public debates?

Unit Nine: 1980 - Present: Modern America

Identity:	How did demographic and economic changes in American society affect popular debates over American national identity?
Work, Exchange, and Technology:	How did the shift to a global economy affect American economic life? How did scientific and technological developments in these years change how Americans lived and worked?
Peopling:	How did increased migration raise questions about American identity and affect the nation demographically, culturally, and politically?
Politics and Power:	How successful were conservatives in achieving their goals? To what extent did liberalism remain influential politically and culturally?
America in the World:	How did the end of the Cold War affect American foreign policy? How did the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 impact America's role in the world?
Environment and Geography:	How did debates over climate change and energy policy affect broader social and political movements?
Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture:	How did technological and scientific innovations in areas such as electronics, biology, medicine, and communications affect society, popular culture, and public discourse? How did a more demographically diverse population shape popular culture?