AP United States History

Revision Sheet · 考前速记

Learn these by heart before the exam. 考试前把这些内容背熟。

The Nine Periods

1491-1607 Contact. Diverse Native societies; Columbian Exchange moves crops, animals and disease both ways; Spanish encomienda and the caste system.

1607-1754 Colonies. New England towns and religion, Middle Colonies' diversity, Chesapeake tobacco and indentured servitude hardening into race slavery; salutary neglect; Great Awakening.

1754-1800 Revolution and founding. Seven Years' War debt leads to taxation without representation; Declaration; Articles fail; Constitution and ratification debates; Washington's precedents; first party system.

1800-1848 Expansion and reform. Marbury establishes judicial review; Louisiana Purchase; market revolution; Jacksonian democracy and Indian Removal; Second Great Awakening drives abolition, temperance and Seneca Falls.

1844-1877 Sectional crisis to Reconstruction. Manifest Destiny and the Mexican War reopen slavery in the territories; Compromise of 1850, Kansas-Nebraska, Dred Scott; Civil War; Emancipation Proclamation; the three Reconstruction amendments; Compromise of 1877 ends Reconstruction.

1865-1898 Industry and the West. Railroads, trusts, Gilded Age politics; new immigration and urbanisation; labour unions; Populists; sharecropping and Plessy entrench segregation.

1890-1945 Reform, empire, world wars. Progressives regulate business and expand democracy; Spanish-American War brings overseas empire; WWI and the Red Scare; Twenties boom; Depression and the New Deal; WWII, internment and the atomic bomb.

1945-1980 Cold War and rights. Containment, Marshall Plan, NATO, Korea, Vietnam; McCarthyism; Brown, the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act; Great Society; second-wave feminism; Watergate.

1980-present Conservatism and globalisation. Reagan's tax cuts and deregulation; end of the Cold War; digital economy and new migration; September 11 and its wars; debates over inequality and immigration.

Themes to Argue With

American and national identity 美国与国家认同: who counts as American, and how citizenship and rights expand or contract

Work, exchange, and technology 劳动、交换与技术: how people made a living, and how technology reorganised labour and capital

Migration and settlement: who moved, what pushed and pulled them, and how arrival changed both migrant and place.

Politics and power: how groups without formal power - enslaved people, women, workers, immigrants - still shaped outcomes.

America in the world: from neutrality to intervention to superpower, and the domestic cost of each turn.

Geography and the environment: land, resources and climate as causes, not scenery.

Social structures: class, race and gender as systems that organised opportunity.

Documents and Cases Worth Naming

Founding: Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Constitution, Federalist 10 and 51, Bill of Rights.

Slavery and freedom: Northwest Ordinance, Missouri Compromise, Fugitive Slave Act, Emancipation Proclamation, 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments.

Court: Marbury v. Madison, McCulloch v. Maryland, Dred Scott v. Sandford, Plessy v. Ferguson, Brown v. Board of Education.

Foreign policy: Monroe Doctrine, Roosevelt Corollary, Fourteen Points, Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan.

Reform: Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments, Social Security Act, Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Historical Thinking Skills

Contextualization 情境化: situate the topic in the broader circumstances of its moment - and connect the context to the argument, not just to the era

Causation 因果分析: distinguish cause from effect, and long-term from immediate; the best answers rank causes rather than list them

Continuity and change 延续与变迁: state what persisted AND what changed across a period, with evidence for each side

Comparison: compare across regions, groups or periods, and explain the reason for the similarity or difference.

Sourcing 史料分析: for a document, explain how its point of view, purpose, situation or intended audience shapes what it says

Corroborate, qualify or modify: a strong essay uses a document that complicates its own claim, then explains

the tension.

Exam technique

Thesis first, in the introduction or conclusion: a defensible claim that answers the whole prompt and establishes a line of reasoning.

For the document-based question, use MOST of the documents as evidence, describe each accurately, and add at least one specific piece of outside evidence that is not in any document.

Source several documents: name the point of view, purpose, historical situation or audience, and explain WHY that matters to the argument.

For the long essay, outside evidence carries everything. Two developed specific examples beat six names in a list.

Short answers need no thesis. Answer each lettered part directly, in one or two sentences, with one specific piece of evidence per part.

Stay inside the prompt's dates. Evidence from outside the window earns nothing, however good.

Complexity comes from qualifying your own argument - a counter-example, a group whose experience differs, or a change that was partial.