

TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES

It is important to prepare for the Regents Examination as you would for any other assignment or assessment given throughout the school year. The test-taking strategies section of this book offers specific strategies for tackling many of the items you will find on the U.S. History and Government Regents Examination. It gives tips for answering multiple-choice, thematic-essay, and document-based questions. In addition, it offers guidelines for analyzing primary sources, maps, charts, graphs, and political cartoons. You can improve your success in taking tests by studying the strategies explained in this section.

Multiple Choice

Multiple-choice questions provide students with alternatives from which to select the right answer. A multiple-choice question consists of a *stem* and a set of *choices*. The stem usually is in the form of a question or an incomplete sentence. One of the choices correctly answers the question or completes the sentence.

- 1 Read the stem carefully. Then read each choice with the stem. Do not decide which choice is correct until you have read all of them.
- 2 Eliminate choices that you know are wrong.
- 3 Pay careful attention to key words in the stem. They may give you clues to the correct answer.
- 4 Look for modifiers that help you rule out incorrect choices.
- 5 If two alternatives directly contradict one another, one is likely to be the correct answer.

1 1 Although President Andrew Johnson declared Reconstruction complete in 1865, Congress

choices

- 1 refused to admit Southern legislators
- 2 ratified the Emancipation Proclamation
- 3 approved the Civil Rights Act
- 4 recognized only seven of the states

You can immediately eliminate choice 2 if you remember that Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation and that Congress did not have to ratify it.

2 One of the main purposes of the Freedmen's Bureau was to

- 1 reward former slaves for their loyalty
- 2 pay for lands given to former slaves
- 3 set up schools for former slaves
- 4 punish white Southerners

3 Main is a key word. Changing it to *in part* would alter the sentence and change the answer.

3 During the Panic of 1873

- 1 all banks closed
- 2 the stock market temporarily collapsed
- 3 most people lost their jobs
- 4 the stock market rose sharply

5 Because these choices contradict one another, one choice or the other is probably the correct one.

4 Here, *all* and *most* overstate conditions. Some banks closed, but not all. Some people lost their jobs, but not most.

Primary Sources

Primary sources are materials that have been written or made by people who took part in or witnessed historical events.

Letters, diaries, speeches, newspaper articles, autobiographies, wills, photographs, and financial records are all examples of primary sources.

- 1 Look at the source line to learn about the document and its author. Consider the reliability of the author and what qualifies him or her to write about the events discussed in the passage.
- 2 Skim the document to get an idea of what it is about.
- 3 Note any special punctuation. Ellipses, for example, indicate that words or sentences have been removed from the passage. Brackets indicate words that were not in the original document.
- 4 Use active reading strategies. For example, ask and answer questions about the content or the credibility of the author's observations as you read.
- 5 Consider for whom the author was writing. The intended audience may influence what and how an author writes.
- 6 Before rereading the document, skim the questions to identify information you need to find. Then reread the document more closely.

One of the first circumstances that opened my eyes to the cruelties and wickedness of slavery and its hardening influences upon my old master, was his refusal to (use) his authority to protect and shield a young woman, a cousin of mine, who had been most cruelly abused and beaten by his overseer. . . . In one of his moments of drunken madness he committed the outrage which brought the young woman in question down to my old master's for protection. . . . Her neck and shoulders were covered with scars newly made, and not content with marring her neck and shoulders with the cowhide, the cowardly wretch had dealt her a blow on the head with a hickory club, which cut a horrible gash and left her face literally covered with blood. In this condition the poor young woman came down to implore [beg] protection at the hands of my old master. I expected to see him boil over with rage . . . but I was disappointed.

1 Frederick Douglass was born into slavery and later escaped to freedom. Since he experienced slavery first-hand, his account can be considered reliable information.

—Frederick Douglass, 1845

5 Douglass is writing to mainly white readers to make them aware of the realities of slavery. This narrative was written in 1845, before the Civil War, while slavery was still legal. He wanted to convince his readers to bring an end to the institution.

- 1 Why does Douglass tell this story?
 - 1 It illustrates why overseers were always cruel.
 - 2 It explains why his master acted as he did.
 - 3 It explains why he hates his old master.
 - 4 It illustrates the cruelty of slavery.
- 2 What did Douglass expect his old master to do?
 - 1 beat the girl and tell her never to complain again
 - 2 become angry at the overseer
 - 3 ignore the incident
 - 4 reward the girl for her courage

Political Cartoons

Political cartoons use a combination of words, images, and symbols to express a point of view on political issues. They are useful primary sources because they reflect the opinions of the time.

- 1 Identify the subject of the cartoon. Titles, captions and dates can provide clues.
- 2 Identify the main characters in the cartoon.
- 3 Look for symbols—ideas or images that stand for something else.
- 4 Use labels and other written information in the cartoon to help you identify the people, places and events represented in the cartoon.
- 5 Analyze the point of view. The use of caricature—the exaggeration of physical features—often signals how the cartoonist feels about the subject.
- 6 Interpret the cartoonist's message.

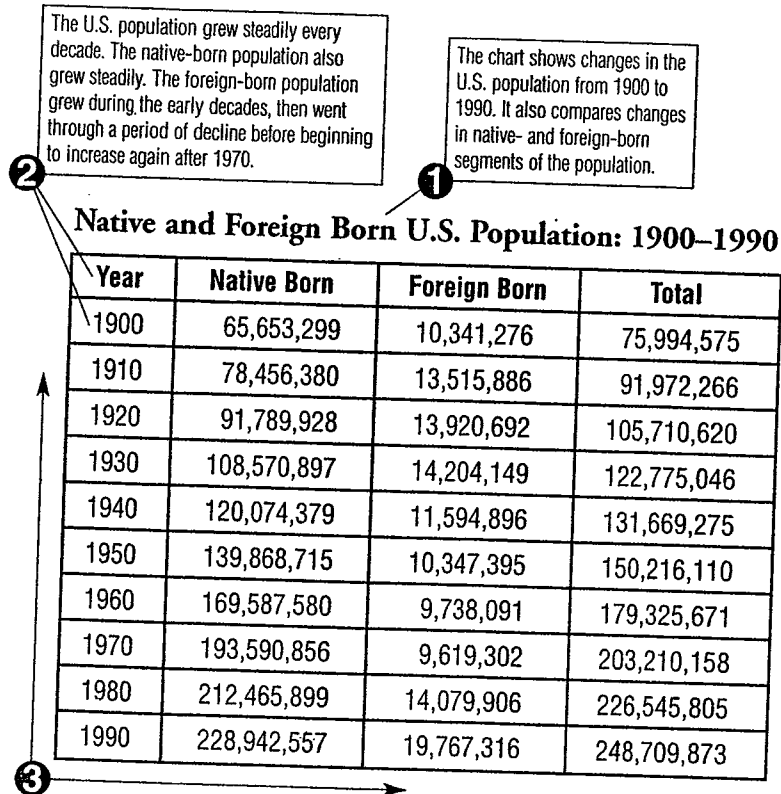


1 THE WORLD CONSTABLE

- 1 What role is the main character playing?
 - 1 policeman over the United States
 - 2 policeman to the world
 - 3 a diplomat
 - 4 leader of the United Nations
- 2 What policy does this cartoon portray?
 - 1 the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine
 - 2 the building of the Panama Canal
 - 3 immigration policies of the early 1900s
 - 4 the role of big business in government

Charts

Charts present information in a visual form. There are different types of charts, including flowcharts, tables, and Venn diagrams. The chart most commonly found on the Regents Examination is the table. Tables organize information in columns and rows for easy viewing.



1 Read the title and identify the subject of the chart. The title may also provide a time period covered by the chart.

2 Examine the column and row headings to learn more about the subject.

3 Compare and contrast the information given from row to row and column to column. Try to identify trends or patterns of change.

4 Try to make generalizations and draw conclusions about the information in the chart.

5 Read the questions, and determine what information you need from the chart. Then study the chart again.

1 Between 1930 and 1990, the number of U.S. citizens who were born in other countries

- 1 increased every decade until 1980 and then decreased
- 2 decreased every decade
- 3 stayed about the same until 1970
- 4 decreased every year until 1980 and then increased

2 From these statistics, you might conclude that immigrants

- 1 were prohibited from entering the U.S. during much of the twentieth century
- 2 have never accounted for a large percentage of the U.S. population
- 3 represented a higher percentage of the population in 1900 than in 1990
- 4 represented about the same percentage of the population in 1900 than in 1990

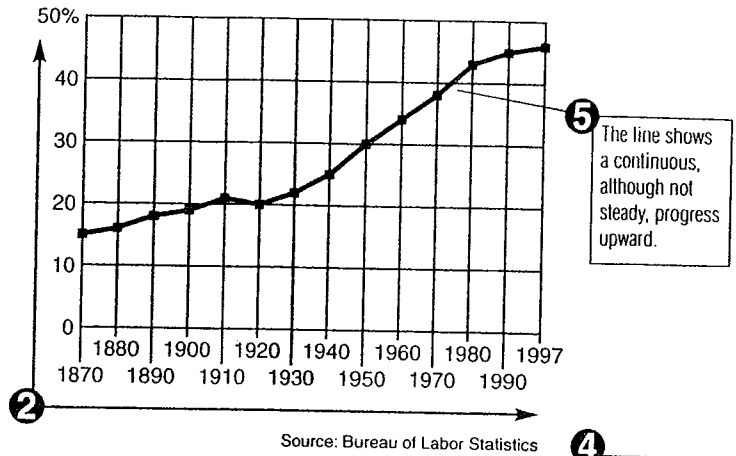
Line and Bar Graphs

Graphs show statistics in a visual form. Line graphs are particularly useful for showing changes over time. Bar graphs make it easy to compare numbers or sets of numbers.

- 1 Read the title and identify the subject of the graph.
- 2 Study the labels on the vertical and horizontal axes to see the kinds of information presented.
- 3 Study the legend, if there is one. It will help you understand the information presented.
- 4 Look at the source line and evaluate reliability of the information in the graph.
- 5 Study the information given and look for trends and patterns. Draw conclusions and make inferences based on the information in the graph.
- 6 Read the questions carefully. Note if they refer to a specific time period or if they focus on trends or historical explanations for trends.

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1 Women's Share of the Labor Force, 1870–1997



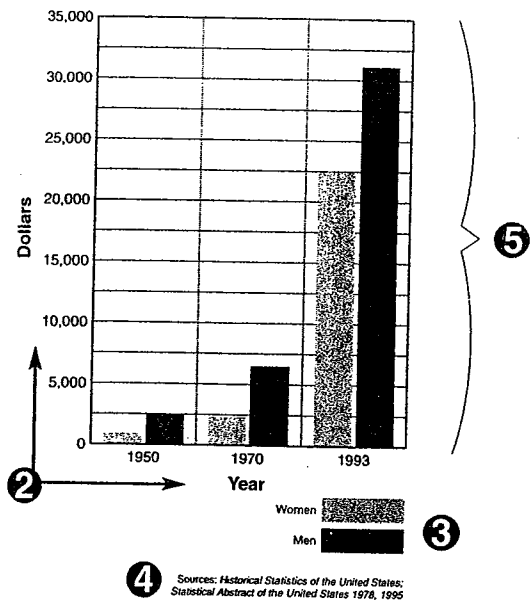
1 Based on the graph, you might conclude that women's share of the labor force

- 1 has changed little
- 2 is declining
- 3 is steadily increasing
- 4 will never equal men's share

5 The line shows a continuous, although not steady, progress upward.

4 The Bureau of Labor Statistics is a government agency and tends to be a reliable information source.

1 Median Incomes for Working Men and Women



2 Since 1950, women's wages

- 1 have increased, but not as quickly as men's
- 2 increased rapidly, but still do not equal men's
- 3 remained about the same compared to men's
- 4 increased rapidly, and nearly equal men's

answers: 1 (3), 2 (2)

Maps

Generally, three kinds of maps—physical maps, political maps, and thematic maps—are used on the Regents Examination. Physical maps display physical features, such as mountains, rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans. Political maps show countries and the political divisions within them. They also show the location of major cities. Thematic, or special-purpose, maps focus on a particular topic, such as population density, election results, or major battles in a war. This is a thematic map that shows various industries in Northern cities of the United States between 1830 and 1850.

1 Read the title of the map and identify the region and the subject.

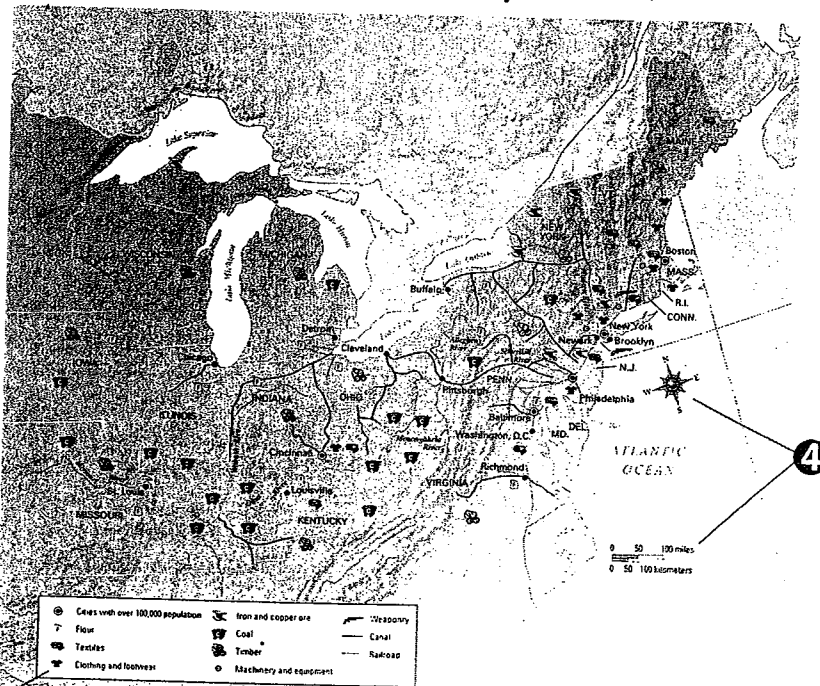
2 Study the legend to find the meaning of symbols used on the map.

3 Examine the symbols on the map and look for patterns.

4 If needed, use the compass rose to determine directions on the map, and the scale to determine distances.

5 Read the questions, and then study the map to determine the answers.

1 Northern Cities and Industry, 1830–1850



1 In what part of the country is most of the textile industry concentrated?

- 1 In New England
- 2 along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers
- 3 in the Midwest
- 4 in the Southern states on the East Coast

2 In areas where the textile industry was strong, what other industry was also prominent?

- 1 timber
- 2 iron and copper ore
- 3 clothing and footwear
- 4 coal

answers: 1 (1), 2 (3)

Thematic Essay

Thematic-essay questions ask you to write an organized essay on a specific theme. Citizenship, Constitutional principles, diversity, economic systems, the environment, immigration and migration, places and regions, and science and technology are examples of themes that might be addressed in thematic-essay questions on the Regents Examination.

1 Read the “Theme” section to find the broad focus of the question.

2 Read the “Task” section and note the action words. These will help you understand exactly what the essay question requires. The Regents Examination provides the following definitions:

(a) discuss means “to make observations about something using facts, reasoning, and arguments; to present in some detail”

(b) describe means “to illustrate something in words or tell about it”

(c) evaluate means “to examine and judge the significance, worth, or condition of; to determine the value of”

(d) show means “to point out; to set forth clearly a position or idea by stating it and giving data which support it”

3 Jot down ideas about the essay theme. Then organize your ideas in an outline.

4 Follow your outline as you write your essay. Remember, your essay should include an introduction, two or more body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

Theme: Constitutional Principles

The United States Constitution represents a guide for all the laws that govern United States citizens. Throughout United States history, our judicial system has passed new laws and interpreted the Constitution in response to changes in American society.

1 This essay question focuses on the U.S. Constitution and how laws and judicial decisions affect it.

Task:

- 2** Identify *two* Supreme Court cases that have had a significant effect on society and law.
- Describe the background of *each* court case. Explain who was involved and why each case was brought before the Supreme Court.
- Identify the Constitutional issue that was raised in each case.
- Explain the significance of each court case and evaluate how it changed the rights of U.S. citizens.

You may use any Supreme Court cases from your study of United States history. Some suggestions you may wish to consider include *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), *Gibbons v. Ogden* (1824), *Dred Scott v. Sanford* (1857), *Korematsu v. United States* (1944), *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966), and *Roe v. Wade* (1973).

You are not limited to these suggestions.

Sample Response The best essays will identify and explain how two Supreme Court cases altered the rights of U.S. citizens or changed their point of view about the law in some significant way. The essays should explain what Constitutional principle was challenged in the case and what was the basis for the decision. Many historic decisions are a result of a fundamental change in society itself since the founding fathers prepared the original document. The essay should point out how these cases helped to keep the Constitution meaningful in changing American society.

Document-Based Questions

Document-based questions have two parts: short-answer questions based upon individual primary source documents, and an essay. You will be presented with a theme and task on a specific subject for your essay. Then you will be asked to answer short-answer questions that require you to analyze and interpret a variety of documents. You then use information from the documents and your knowledge of history to write the essay.

- 1 Read the "Historical Context" to learn about the issue addressed in the questions.
- 2 Note the action words used in the "Task" section. These words tell you exactly what the essay question requires.
- 3 Study and analyze each document. Think about how the documents are connected to the essay question. Take notes on your ideas.
- 4 Read and answer each of the document-specific questions.

Document-Based Question

This question is based on the accompanying documents. Some of the documents have been edited for the purposes of the question. The question is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. As you analyze the documents, take into account the context of each document and any point of view that may be presented in the document.

1 Historical Context:

In the decades following the American Revolution, the United States steadily pushed its borders farther and farther west. Many pioneers seized the opportunity to move into these new lands and build their homes. However, not all Americans benefited from this expansion of U.S. territory.

Task:

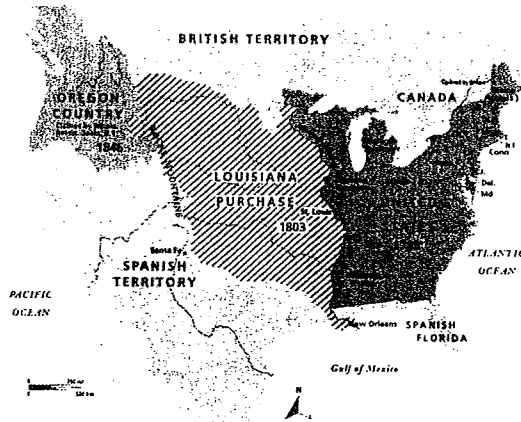
Using information from the documents and your knowledge of social studies, answer the questions that follow each document in Part 1. Your answers to the questions will help you write the Part 2 essay in which you will be asked to:

- Describe the westward expansion of the United States.
- 2 • Discuss the reasons for westward expansion.
- Evaluate how westward expansion affected both settlers and Native Americans.

Part 1: Short Answer

Analyze the documents and answer the questions that follow each document in the space provided. Your answer to the questions will help you write the essay.

Document 1



- 1 What does this map tell you about the rate at which the United States expanded its territory after gaining its independence?

The United States expanded its territory rapidly. After adding all the land east of the Mississippi to its territory in 1783, the United States added more territory piece by piece until it spanned the continent in 1846–1848. [2]

Document 2

“It gives me pleasure to announce to Congress that the benevolent policy of government, steadily pursued for nearly thirty years, in relation to the removal of the Indians beyond the white settlements is approaching a happy consummation. . . . The consequences of a speedy removal will be important to the United States, to individual states, and to the Indians themselves. . . . It puts to an end to all possible danger of collision between the authorities of the general and states governments on account of the Indians. It will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters. . . . It will separate the Indians from immediate contact with settlements of whites, free them from the power of the states, enable them to pursue happiness in their own way an under their own rude institutions . . .

—President Andrew Jackson,
Removal Act of 1830

- 2 Identify two reasons that President Jackson issued the Removal Act of 1830.

Jackson believed that this act would end conflicts between Native Americans and government by removing them from white settlements. He also states that this separation will let the Native Americans pursue happiness on their own terms. [2]

Document 3

Ho for Kansas!

Brethren, Friends, & Fellow Citizens:
I feel thankful to inform you that the
REAL ESTATE
AND
Homestead Association,
Will Leave Here the
15th of April, 1878,
In pursuit of Homes in the Southwestern
Lands of America, at Transportation
Rates, cheaper than ever
was known before.
For full information inquire of
Benj. Singleton, better known as old Pap,
NO. 5 NORTH FRONT STREET.
Beware of Speculators and Adventurers, as it is a dangerous thing
to fall in their hands.
Nashville, Tenn., March 18, 1878

One of the many posters calling on others to leave for Kansas.

- 3 What incentives does this handbill offer new settlers to come to Kansas?

The author offers homes in the Southwest and cheap transportation to get there. [1]

- 6 What groups or organizations are responsible for producing this handbill?

The Real Estate and Homestead Association produced this handbill. [1]

- 5 Carefully read the essay question. Then create an outline for your essay.
- 6 Write your essay. Be sure that it has an introductory paragraph that introduces your argument, main body paragraphs that explain it, and a concluding paragraph that restates your position. In your essay, include details from specific documents to support your ideas and add other supporting facts or details that you know from your study of United States history.

Part 2: Essay

Write a well-organized essay that includes an introduction, several paragraphs, and a conclusion. Address all aspects of the task by analyzing the documents. Support your response with relevant facts, examples and details. Include additional outside information.

Historical Context:

In the decades following the American Revolution, the United States steadily pushed its borders farther and farther west. Many pioneers seized the opportunity to move into these new lands and build their homes. However, not all Americans benefited from this expansion of U.S. territory.

Task:

Using information from the documents and your knowledge of social studies, write an essay in which you:

- Describe the westward expansion of the United States.
- Discuss the reasons for westward expansion.
- Evaluate how westward expansion affected both settlers and Native Americans.

Essay Rubric The best essays will incorporate the documents and bring in outside information from your study of United States history. The United States expanded westward very rapidly, reaching the west coast just seventy years after winning its independence from Great Britain (Document 1). This expansion was encouraged by people who wanted to develop the land and by others who sought opportunities to own land and build cities (Document 3). Essays should also note that even though many people supported and encouraged expansion, not everyone benefited. Native Americans such as the Cherokee, for example, were pushed from their lands, which were then taken over by the white settlers (Document 2).