

United States History

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SAT® Subject Test in United States History

In this document, you will find detailed answer explanations to all of the United States History practice questions from *Getting Ready for the SAT Subject Tests*. By reviewing these answer explanations, you can familiarize yourself with the types of questions on the test and learn your strengths and weaknesses. The estimated difficulty level is based on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 the easiest and 5 the most difficult.

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1. Difficulty: 2

Choice (A) is correct. Between 1620 and 1700, immigrants to Britain’s North American colonies came overwhelmingly from England; it has been estimated that the ancestry of the British North American colonial population was 80 percent English and Welsh in 1700. Between 1700 and 1770, however, this changed as the population became far more diverse. In the eighteenth century, non-English peoples such as Africans, Germans, Scots, Scots-Irish, Irish and Dutch came to the British North American colonies in large numbers, as a whole exceeding the number of English immigrants. In other words, immigrants to British North America in the seventeenth century were mostly English, while immigrants in the eighteenth century were mostly non-English.

2. Difficulty: 2

Choice (E) is correct. The 1765 Stamp Act required people in the British North American colonies to purchase specially stamped paper for all newspapers, legal documents and other public papers. This law was enacted under the leadership of British Prime Minister George Grenville. In the aftermath of the French and Indian War (also known as the Seven Years War), which ended in 1763, the British government was financially overextended, in part by the costs of defending its North American colonies. Colonial tax rates had until this time been lower than those in Great Britain, so Grenville sought the passage of the Stamp Act in order to spread taxation more evenly and generate revenue for the British government (that is, for the Crown). This law prompted widespread protests in the colonies.

3. Difficulty: 3

Choice (C) is correct. While it is difficult to generalize about the framers of the Constitution, most of the leading framers did oppose political parties. In *The Federalist* papers, Alexander Hamilton and James Madison — two of the most significant framers of the Constitution — wrote strongly against “factions” or political parties and explained the ways in which the structure of the Constitution was designed to prevent factions from forming. In particular, Hamilton and Madison believed that both the scale of the country, and the system of checks and balances that they had built into the government, would mitigate factionalism. The framers did not believe in the supremacy of the executive branch (A); another reason for the system of checks and balances was to restrain the power of the presidency. They did not have great faith in the goodness and rationality of the people (B); most federal offices were initially chosen by indirect election to prevent excessive democratic influence. They did not incorporate the most democratic ideals of the Declaration of Independence (D); they continued to tolerate nondemocratic elements such as slavery and restrictions on the right to vote. They also did not believe in the unanimity of public opinion (E); debates over the ratification of the Constitution highlighted already existing divisions.

4. Difficulty: 5

Choice (E) is correct. The excerpt, from an 1841 essay by transcendentalist thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson called “Man the Reformer,” reflects the characteristically transcendentalist celebration of nature as the source of human goodness and the justification of social reform. Emerson suggests this when he says when humans are “renouncer[s] of lies” and “restorer[s] of truth” in the same way that Nature “every hour repairs herself.” It also suggests that by improving society — a frequent goal of activists, intellectuals and religious thinkers in the 1830s and 1840s — people could become better aligned with the natural world.

5. **Difficulty:** 4
Choice (D) is correct. To arrive at this answer, you must be aware that the trend referred to in the question came about primarily because of technological advances that resulted in increased productivity. None of the other answer choices satisfactorily accounts for all the conditions described in the question.
6. **Difficulty:** 4
Choice (A) is correct. The only statement about the movement to prohibit alcoholic beverages in the United States that is **not** true is the statement in choice (A). The movement to prohibit alcohol did not arise suddenly in the context of the First World War; instead it had been a prominent part of life in the United States since at least the 1830s, and prohibitionists had succeeded in establishing local and state restrictions on alcohol since the 1890s. Prohibiting alcohol was a prominent cause for many reformers during the Progressive Era of the early twentieth century (B); many prohibition advocates also associated excessive alcohol consumption with immigrants (C); women did play prominent roles in the prohibition movement through organizations such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League (D); and new scientific evidence about the harmful effects of alcohol did emerge at this time (E).
7. **Difficulty:** 5
Choice (B) is correct. The first statement reflects Booker T. Washington's encouragement of African Americans to accommodate themselves to existing conditions and to work gradually to gain greater social standing. The second statement reflects Malcolm X's rejection of both the existing power structure and the goal of desegregation; he instead favored establishing greater autonomy for African Americans. The third statement quotes W.E.B. Du Bois, who believed that the most capable and best-educated African Americans could become advocates for their people and elevate the social standing of their race.
8. **Difficulty:** 3
Choice (D) is correct. Jackson Pollock was a leading American artist of the 1940s and 1950s, and his Abstract Expressionist work helped make American painting much more prominent in the international art world following the Second World War. By contrast, Mary Cassatt's work (A) was most prominent in the late nineteenth century. Thomas Eakins (B) was likewise most active in the late nineteenth century. Grant Wood's (C) most famous work appeared in the 1930s. John S. Copley (E) worked in the late eighteenth century.
9. **Difficulty:** 3
Choice (B) is correct. In the period between 1915 and 1980, several major population shifts occurred within and into the United States, including African Americans moving from the rural South to Northern cities (A), retirees and economic migrants moving from the North to the Sun Belt (C), middle- and working-class people leaving inner cities for suburbs (D), and immigrants coming from Caribbean islands such as Cuba and Puerto Rico to the United States mainland (E). In comparison, the number of people who moved from New England to the Midwest (B) in this period was relatively small.
10. **Difficulty:** 3
Choice (C) is correct. Richard Nixon was elected president in the midst of the Vietnam conflict between the United States and South Vietnam on one side and Communist-ruled North Vietnam on the other. After a period of escalation, the Nixon administration gradually scaled back United States military support for South Vietnam while negotiating with North Vietnam. In 1973, the United States and North Vietnam signed the Paris Peace Accords and United States forces withdrew from the conflict. Diplomatic contacts between the United States and the People's Republic of China began during Richard Nixon's administration, and formal diplomatic relations were established during Jimmy Carter's administration; neither occurred during Lyndon B. Johnson's (A). The Suez Crisis of 1956 was resolved during Dwight D. Eisenhower's administration, not John F. Kennedy's (B). The signing of the Camp David Accords took place during Jimmy Carter's administration, not Gerald R. Ford's (D). The resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis took place during John F. Kennedy's administration, not Jimmy Carter's (E).
11. **Difficulty:** 3
Choice (D) is correct. Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on Sept. 22, 1862, to be effective on Jan. 1, 1863. The Proclamation declared that all enslaved persons in areas still in rebellion against the United States were free. At the time, the president limited emancipation to these areas based on a variety of legal and political considerations; the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment near the end of the Civil War completely abolished slavery in the United States.
12. **Difficulty:** 3
Choice (E) is correct. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) was one of the most important campaigners for women's legal and political rights in the nineteenth century. She based her arguments for women's rights on political and religious principles she felt were essential to the United States, as demonstrated in this passage.

13. Difficulty: 2

Choice (B) is correct. In the early nineteenth century, both the United States and Great Britain had overlapping territorial claims to the Oregon Country, an area that embraced present-day Oregon, Washington, Idaho and British Columbia. The disagreement eventually centered on the shaded region labeled “Crux of Dispute” on the map. In 1846, the administration of President James K. Polk and the British government agreed to divide the Oregon Country along the 49th parallel of north latitude.

14. Difficulty: 3

Choice (D) is correct. The “New Deal” was the term for a wide variety of programs, initiatives and agencies created by Franklin D. Roosevelt’s administration to deal with the economic and social disruptions caused by the Great Depression. The gradual recovery of the United States under the New Deal led many people to feel that the government should continue to intervene to remedy economic problems; in other words, people developed new attitudes about the role and function of government.

15. Difficulty: 2

Choice (A) is correct. During the Second World War, the massive expansion of war production in the United States greatly increased the demand for labor just as millions of men were being drafted into the military. As a result, large numbers of women joined the workforce in the defense industry. The United States government encouraged this trend with posters such as the one shown.