

Tips and Strategies for Short Answer Questions

On the AP exam, you will have 40 minutes to answer three of four short answer questions. Most will include a stimulus and each will include 3 parts.

Required Question 1: periods 3–8 (with primary or secondary source)

Required Question 2: periods 3–8 (with text excerpt or visual source)

Choose between w Question 3: periods 1–5 OR Question 4: periods 6–9 (no stimulus)

This type of question does not require a thesis statement... it is not an essay. Good quality answers can be one or two sentences each. Short answer questions test content knowledge, understanding of themes and – of course – the historical thinking skills!

Three Key Strategies:

1. Use the lingo of the question to set up your answer!
2. Include one piece of evidence and/or insure your analysis of a document goes beyond the obvious!
3. Explain how or why!

Sample SAQ

Directions:

Read each question carefully and write your responses in the box provided. You are not required to use the entire box, and anything outside of the box will not be graded. **Use complete sentences.** No credit will be earned for incomplete sentences.

Using your knowledge of U.S. history answer parts a., b., and c.

- a. Briefly explain how *Brown vs Board of Education* impacted the development of social equality during the Civil Rights Era.
- b. Briefly explain ONE way that the federal government increased social equality in the Civil Rights Era.
- c. Briefly explain ONE way the American people reacted negatively to the changes in the Civil Rights Era.

Sample Answer:

Brown vs Board of Education impacted the development of social equality during the Civil Rights Era is by reversing the earlier decision in Plessy vs Ferguson. The Brown Case led to the desegregation of schools which increased social equality because it treated people the same rather than separating them based on their race.

One way the federal government increased social equality in the Civil Rights Era was the Voting Rights Act signed by President Johnson which removed many discriminatory practices that had reduced African American rights to vote, increasing social equality for minorities at the federal level.

One way the American people reacted negatively to the changes in the Civil Rights Era is many schools including Little Rock High School refused to integrate following Brown vs Board of Education. This was negative, because it illustrated white supremacy and refusal to follow new laws.

Hints:

No fluff! Get to the point and move on.

Read the question carefully! Follow directions!

Include specific evidence! One piece per answer is all you need!

If you are analyzing a document... go beyond the obvious and don't quote!

Clearly answer question! Pay attention to the verbs!

It's not a paragraph... it's three answers to three questions.

Answer the questions in order. Indent each answer.

Remember COMPLETE sentences and no thesis!

ATFP! (address the full prompt)

Answer ALL THREE SAQs! Remember the last one you are choosing... so don't address both!

Tip: Make sure you record your answers on the appropriate answer page! Look for numbers or "Q1, Q2, Q3!"

Tip: Remember that your College Board Content Outline is your skeleton to the course. Use it as a study tool.