

United States History and Government
Content-Specific Rubric
Thematic Essay
June 2005

Theme: Reform Movements in the United States

Reform movements are intended to improve different aspects of American life. Through the actions of individuals, organizations, or the government, the goals of these reform movements have been achieved, but with varying degrees of success.

Task: Identify *two* reform movements that have had an impact on American life and for *each*

- Discuss *one* major goal of the movement
- Describe *one* action taken by an individual, an organization, or the government in an attempt to achieve this goal
- Evaluate the extent to which this goal was achieved

You may use any reform movement from your study of United States history. Some suggestions you might wish to consider include the abolitionist movement, woman's suffrage movement, temperance movement, Progressive movement, civil rights movement, women's rights movement, and environmental movement.

Scoring Notes:

1. This thematic essay has a minimum of *six* components (*three* aspects [a major goal, an action taken, and an evaluation of the extent to which the goal was achieved] for each of *two* reform movements).
2. If the topics of woman's suffrage and women's rights are chosen as the reform movements, the response must include distinct and separate information for both movements.

Score of 5:

- Thoroughly develops *all* aspects of the task evenly and in depth by identifying *two* reform movements that have had an impact on American life, discussing *one* major goal of *each* movement, describing *one* action taken by an individual, an organization, or the government in an attempt to achieve *each* goal, and evaluating the extent to which *each* goal was achieved
- Is more analytical than descriptive (analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information) e.g., for *woman's suffrage*: a growing number of women noticed a problem with the sexist inequalities in society and began to speak up; because of this reform movement; women today are more politically equal to men; for *civil rights*: even though slavery had long been abolished, Jim Crow laws existed, segregation still existed, and racism persisted; although racism is an ever present factor of American society, the civil rights movement significantly decreased the inequalities and stereotypes that existed, allowing for an end to segregation and the beginning of integration, which is still going on today
- Richly supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details e.g., for *woman's suffrage*: Elizabeth Cady Stanton; Lucretia Mott; Susan B. Anthony; Seneca Falls Convention; 19th amendment; women working in factories during World War I and World War II; for *civil rights*: Jim Crow laws; *Plessy v. Ferguson*; *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*; segregation; integration; racism; sit-ins; boycotts; passive resistance; Rosa Parks; Montgomery bus boycott; Martin Luther King, Jr.; March on Washington; "I have a Dream" speech; President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Little Rock incident; Civil Rights Act of 1964; Voting Rights Act of 1965
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

Score of 4:

- Develops **all** aspects of the task but may do so somewhat unevenly by developing two aspects of the task more thoroughly than a third aspect of the task for both reform movements *or* developing all three aspects of the task for one reform movement more thoroughly than for the other reform movement
- Is both descriptive and analytical (applies, analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information) e.g., for *woman's suffrage*: inequalities existed between men and women in American society; by not allowing women the right to vote, they were denied a right already given to men; for *civil rights*: slavery had been abolished but Jim Crow laws were put into effect, encouraging racism; the civil rights movement decreased segregation, but some racism still exists
- Supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

Note: At score levels 5 and 4, all **six** components of the task should be developed.

Holistic Scoring Reminder: This note applies only to the evaluation of bullet 1.

Score of 3:

- Develops **all** aspects of the task with little depth *or* develops **at least four** aspects of the task in some depth
- Is more descriptive than analytical (applies, may analyze, and/or evaluates information) e.g., for *woman's suffrage*: some women began to take action to deal with getting the right to vote; the woman's suffrage movement gave women the right to vote; for *civil rights*: Jim Crow laws were put into effect after the Civil War; the civil rights movement has helped to bring about integration
- Includes some relevant facts, examples, and details; may include some minor inaccuracies
- Demonstrates a satisfactory plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that may be a restatement of the theme

Note: If **at least three** components have been thoroughly developed evenly and in depth, and the response meets most of the other Level 5 criteria, the overall response may be a Level 3 paper.

Score of 2:

- Minimally develops **all** aspects of the task *or* develops **at least three** aspects of the task in some depth
- Is primarily descriptive; may include faulty, weak, or isolated application or analysis e.g., a war broke out and all of the men were at war; the employers had no choice but to hire the women, since there were not strong men around; the Emancipation Proclamation was a declaration that issued the freedom of all slaves; Susan B. Anthony helped organize and attended the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848
- Includes few relevant facts, examples, and details; may include some inaccuracies
- Demonstrates a general plan of organization; may lack focus; may contain digressions; may not clearly identify which aspect of the task is being addressed; may lack an introduction and/or a conclusion

Score of 1:

- Minimally develops some aspects of the task
- Is descriptive; may lack understanding, application, or analysis
- Includes few relevant facts, examples, or details; may include inaccuracies
- May demonstrate a weakness in organization; may lack focus; may contain digressions; may not clearly identify which aspect of the task is being addressed; may lack an introduction and/or a conclusion

Score of 0:

Fails to develop the task or may only refer to the theme in a general way; *OR* includes no relevant facts, examples, or details; *OR* includes only the theme, task, or suggestions as copied from the test booklet; *OR* is illegible; *OR* is a blank paper

Throughout American history, reform movements have arisen to deal with major problems facing American society. This was certainly true of the Progressive movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s and the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Both achieved many of their goals and as a result American society is greatly changed.

As the 1880s began, so did the rapid growth of big business. These companies were controlling industries, creating monopolies, practicing unfair ethics, and killing the competition of the small businessman. Then came the labor unions. People were being forced to work up to 16 hour days on very low wages, no benefits, they were dead tired, worked to the bone, and could barely afford to live. Unions, which worked for the rights of the employees, were illegal early on, and riots sometimes broke out when workers tried to strike or picket. All these things were making Big Business look criminal and almost evil, yet, until these companies were challenged, nothing changed.

As more time passed, these businesses and their "bosses" continued to grow and get wealthy, people finally stepped in. A new era began—the Progressive movement. These were people who worked tirelessly for the rights of the workers and to regulate Big Business. Pressure was put on government for help, and so they stepped in, laws were passed granting maximum work hours for women. Many labor laws were passed regarding child workers. The Sherman Antitrust and Clayton Acts were passed to break up unfair trusts, monopolies, and further observe the actions of the bosses and how they practiced. Theodore Roosevelt was a famous trustbuster. Many changes were made because of these "Progressivists," and we have much to thank them

Soc. Even today, monopolistic businesses are subject to government action. In terms of influence, this Progressive era greatly impacted American society. Progressive reforms were expanded by the New Deal and the Great Society. Employees now enjoy ~~the~~ health care, dental and Social Security pension benefits. A minimum wage - which varies state to state - is mandatory for paid employees. Job hours are regulated and break time is a must. The businesses themselves are always being watched by the government, society, and the workers. We owe a lot to these Progressiveists of the past. Without their selfless actions, we might not be enjoying how we are treated at work at all.

Another reform movement that greatly impacted American life was the Civil Rights movement for African Americans in the 1950s and 1960s. Even though the 13th, 14th & 15th amendments were passed after the Civil War, African Americans were not treated as equal to whites. Many African Americans were kept from voting by grandfather clauses and the threats of the KKK. The Supreme Court ruling in Plessy v. Ferguson established a "separate but equal" doctrine in public places. Southern states passed more Jim Crow laws. African Americans had to go to separate schools, use different drinking fountains and restrooms. Neither the federal or state governments were doing anything to correct these situations.

The major goal of the Civil Rights movement was to make blacks truly equal to whites. President Truman issued an executive order banning segregation in the military, but legal segregation was still a fact of life in Southern states. Even with the Brown v. Board decision in 1954, many Southern

states were doing little to integrate ^{public} schools. Then Rosa Parks stepped in and refused to give up her seat on a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama. She was arrested and convicted of breaking a segregation law. Soon all of the African Americans were boycotting the city buses. Martin Luther King then stepped in as a leader in the boycott. Even though it was a great physical hardship for many, African American workers organized car pools or walked rather than ride segregated buses. Finally, bus segregation was outlawed.

The success in ending segregation on public buses encouraged African Americans to focus on other areas of inequality. The 1964 Civil Rights Act outlawed racial discrimination in employment and public facilities. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 helped African Americans in Southern states register to vote. These laws might not have been possible without the earlier success of the Montgomery bus boycott. What an impact these laws had on our society! Speaking of influence, where would we be without the actions of civil rights activists – MLK, Jr., Thurgood Marshall – and all their supporters? They fought for the rights and natural freedoms we all deserve – life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They truly changed our lives.

It is clear that both the Progressive movement and the Civil Rights movement dealt with major problems confronting American society. Both were largely successful and changed American society greatly. The New Deal and the Great Society programs were built on the Progressive movement. The success of the African American Civil Rights movement encouraged other groups such as the Native Americans to push for equality. We will forever be indebted to those who fought for the betterment of society.