

United States History and Government
Content-Specific Rubric
Thematic Essay—January 2006

Theme: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions — Controversial Issues

Many controversial *domestic* issues have divided the American people. The United States government has taken actions to address these issues.

Task: Identify *one* controversial *domestic* issue that has divided the American people and

- Discuss the historical background of the controversy
- Explain the point of view of those who supported this issue
- Explain the point of view of those who opposed this issue
- Discuss *one* United States government action that was taken to address this issue

You may use any controversial *domestic* issue that has divided the American people. Some suggestions you might wish to consider include placing Native American Indians on reservations, slavery, women's suffrage, Prohibition, the use of child labor, and the policy of unlimited immigration.

Scoring Notes:

1. The topic chosen for this essay must be a controversial *domestic* issue in which clearly delineated positions have been taken to support and oppose the issue.
2. The issue can be any controversial domestic issue that has divided the American people from any period in United States history. If an issue such as the Vietnam War is chosen and the focus is on the domestic unrest caused by this war, it may be scored. However, it is not acceptable if the focus is on the Cold War.
3. The action taken to address the issue must be an action taken by the United States government.
4. The United States government action taken to address the issue can be an immediate action or a long-term action.
5. This thematic essay has a minimum of *four* components (the historical background of the controversial domestic issue, the point of view of those who supported the issue, the point of view of those who opposed the issue, and *one* United States government action taken to address the issue).

Score of 5:

- Thoroughly develops all aspects of the task evenly and in depth by discussing *one* controversial domestic issue that has divided the American people, explaining the point of view of those who supported this issue, explaining the point of view of those who opposed this issue, and discussing *one* United States government action that was taken to address this issue
- Is more analytical than descriptive (analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information), e.g., *slavery*: they wanted slaves to provide the manpower to grow the crops on the plantations; slavery was crucial to the Southern agricultural economy and indirectly supported the Northern industrial economy; sectional differences between the North and the South intensified over the issue of slavery; the South felt threatened by the North and felt the Northerners just wanted to destroy the Southerners' way of life; the United States government was torn between the interests of both regions; the Emancipation Proclamation was the first step in bringing African Americans closer to the equality that they deserved; the 13th amendment did not lead to full equality because Southern whites instituted Black Codes and Jim Crow laws
- Richly supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details, e.g., *slavery*: introduction of slavery during the colonial period; more economic reasons for slavery in the South than in the North; three-fifths compromise of the constitutional convention; Missouri Compromise; Compromise of 1850; Henry Clay as the Great Compromiser; Fugitive Slave Laws; *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; *Dred Scott v. Sanford*; Underground Railroad; Bleeding Kansas; Civil War amendments
- 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 by discussing *one* controversial domestic issue that has divided the American people, explaining the point of view of those who supported this issue, explaining the point of view of those who opposed this issue, and discussing *one* United States government action that was taken to address this issue, but may do so somewhat unevenly by discussing one aspect of the task less thoroughly than the other three aspects of the task
- Is both descriptive and analytical (applies, analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information), e.g., *slavery*: the development of agriculture in the South led to a need for a large and cheap labor supply; because of Manifest Destiny, slavery was becoming more than just a moral issue
- 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 *four* 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 three* aspects of the task in some depth
- Is more descriptive than analytical (applies, may analyze and/or evaluate information)
- Includes some relevant facts, examples, and details; may include some minor inaccuracies, e.g., *slavery*: Emancipation Proclamation freed all slaves; incorrect numbers for the Civil War amendments; *women's suffrage*: no women voted before 1920; incorrect number for the amendment
- Demonstrates a satisfactory plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that may be a restatement of the theme

Note: If *at least two* 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 two* aspects of the task in some depth *or* develops *one* aspect of the task in depth and minimally develops *two* other aspects of the task
- Is primarily descriptive; may include faulty, weak, or isolated application or analysis, e.g., *slavery*: Southerners seceded from the Union and created the Confederacy based solely on the slavery issue; *women's suffrage*: as the nation became wealthy, families did not need a woman to keep a job
- 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 the course of United States history, there have been many internal differences that have divided people religious, ethnically, or sectionally across the country. In response to these controversial domestic issues, the government has acted by taking both radical and ~~conservative~~ conservative actions to appease both sides of the conflict. A prime example of a domestic issue that has divided the American people is slavery – specifically during the ante-bellum period (1800-1860's).

Slavery has been an essential practice for Americans since ~~the~~ the colonial era. During the colonization of the New World, Britain and their colonists advocated the slave trade for economic opportunity and steadiness in the fledgling society. Slaves provided many benefits to plantation owners and farmers. They helped increase crop production in the territory and at a relatively cheap cost. Moreover, slaves helped farmers to work vast pieces of land with little supervision, or the need to hire workers to do this for them. As the United States developed as its own separate nation, slavery played a larger role in political, social, and economic affairs. The North was turning into a modernized and industrial juggernaut, while the South was still dependant on agricultural goods and "King Cotton." Because of this, slavery gradually diffused out of the

North, but flourished in the South. Slavery had died where it was not economically important, an aspect which set the stage for differences of opinion between the North and the South.

Many people in the North considered slavery to be a social evil. Northerners felt that it was their moral obligations to help blacks progress in life, and that Southerners were the uncivilized, corrupted beings on American society. Because of the rapid industrialization and lack of arable farm land, people in the North opposed to the practice of slavery across the country. The ethnocentric views of Northerners was reflected in the rise of abolitionism in the United States. Moreover, the North was against pro-slavery legislation passed in Congress, such as the Fugitive Slave Law, which forced all Northern states to return all 'loose' slaves back to their rightful owners. This denunciation of slavery was a direct opposite from the Southern view of glorifying the practice of slavery. The South claimed that slavery was an economic necessity to the fragile economy of the region.

Before the invention of the cotton gin and the rise of the number of slaves in the South, the southern economy staggered dismally. Slaves had proven that with their ^{prudence} ~~prudence~~ economic production would increase

up to three times ~~the~~ ^{the South's} original production. Another view point of Southern Plantation owners was that slaves were better off being slaves. Plantation owners held the belief that blacks were indifferent to their own fate, so farmers exploited all that they were worth. This idea carried large in Southern domestic opinion, and played even a greater role in the social war between the North and South.

One government action taken ~~to~~ ^{to} address the slavery issue was the Compromise of 1820, better known as the Missouri Compromise. This compromise tried to appease both the North and South beliefs about slavery, but was later found unconstitutional in the Supreme Court Case Dred Scott vs. Sanford. Nonetheless, it was a government attempt to resolve the slavery question. At this time, Missouri, a predominately slave state, had reached the population quota to ~~and~~ apply for statehood. However, Missouri was situated in the Northern section of the country, and Northerners did not want a slave state diffusing into the region.

In response, the government also realizing Maine had enough people to become a state, created Maine out of the old Massachusetts territory. Also, Missouri was admitted the Union as a slave state. This action

Anchor Paper – Thematic Essay—Level 5 – A

maintained the balance of free and slave states across the country. Moreover, it created all states south of 36° 30' to become slave states if enough votes advocating it were obtained. This government action appeased both sides for a short while, until the Dred Scott Case tested its constitutionality and 'restirred' tensions again.

Throughout history, there have been many controversial issue which has ~~divided~~ divided the American people.

Anchor Level 5-A

The response:

- Thoroughly develops all aspects of the task evenly and in depth for the controversial domestic issue of slavery
- Is more analytical than descriptive (many internal differences have divided people religiously, ethnically, or sectionally across the country; Britain and its colonists advocated the slave trade for economic opportunity and steadiness in the fledgling society; as the United States developed as its own separate nation, slavery played a larger role in political, social, and economic affairs; slavery had died where it was not economically important, an aspect which set the stage for differences of opinion between the North and the South; because of the rapid industrialization and lack of arable farmland, people in the North opposed the practice of slavery across the country; the ethnocentric views of Northerners was reflected in the rise of abolitionism in the United States; this compromise tried to appease both the North and South beliefs about slavery; this action maintained the balance of free and slave states across the country)
- Richly supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details (antebellum period, 1800–1860s; North turning into an industrial juggernaut; King Cotton; the North was against pro-slavery legislation passed in Congress, such as the Fugitive Slave law; invention of the cotton gin; Compromise of 1820—the Missouri Compromise; *Dred Scott v. Sanford*); contains an unclear comment (“moreover, it created all states south of 36° 30' to become slave states if enough votes advocating it were obtained” might accurately refer to the need to have Congress vote to admit the state or might inaccurately refer to the use of popular sovereignty)
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction that is beyond a restatement of the theme and a conclusion that simply restates the theme

Conclusion: Overall, the response fits the criteria for Level 5. The response contains rich details that support the many analytical statements. The chronology in this response is excellent and shows a clear understanding of the controversy over slavery. The many positive qualities of this response outweigh the weak conclusion and one unclear statement, making this a Level 5 paper.