

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

Theme: Change — Turning Points

Major historical events are often referred to as turning points because they have led to important political, social, and economic changes.

Task: Identify *two* major events in United States history that were important turning points and for *each*

- Describe the historical circumstances that led to the event
- Discuss the political, social, *and/or* economic changes that resulted from the event.

You may use any major event from your study of United States history. Some suggestions you might wish to consider include the signing of the Declaration of Independence (1776), end of Reconstruction (1877), Henry Ford's use of the assembly line (1913), United States entry into World War I (1917), *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (1964), and the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989).

Scoring Notes:

1. This thematic essay has a minimum of *six* components (*two* aspects [the historical circumstances and *two* changes] for each of *two* major events or "turning points").
2. The changes can be political, economic, social *or* any combination thereof that resulted from the major event in United States history. The response does not have to identify the change by name; it may be implied.
3. Either immediate and/or long-term changes may be used in the discussion.
4. A "turning point" can be a specific event, such as passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution *or* the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Topeka*, *or* a more general series of actions, such as the New Deal programs *or* the Progressive reform movement.

Score of 5:

- Thoroughly develops *all* aspects of the task evenly and in depth by identifying *two* major events in United States history that were turning points, describing the historical circumstances that led to these events, and discussing the political, social and/or economic changes that resulted from the events
- Is more analytical than descriptive (analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information), e.g., *Declaration of Independence*: fear of repetition of rule by a strong leader led to the creation of the Articles of Confederation with a weak national government; Declaration of Independence became a model for other nations and groups; *end of Reconstruction*: allowed the South to destroy most of the civil rights efforts created by Congress during the late 1860s and early 1870s; Jim Crow laws enacted by the new conservative state governments were able to limit the movement of freedmen in the South
- Richly supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details, e.g., *Declaration of Independence*: change in British policies toward the colonies following the French and Indian War; Sugar Act, Stamp Act; John Locke and Enlightenment theory; *end of Reconstruction*: sharecropping; Ku Klux Klan; Hayes-Tilden election; *Plessy v. Ferguson*)
- 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 discussing one aspect of the task more thoroughly for both turning points than for the other aspect *or* by developing both aspects of the task more thoroughly for one turning point than for the other turning point
- Is both descriptive and analytical (applies, analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information), e.g., *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*: despite *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling, the reality was that the segregated black schools in the South were inferior to the white schools; Court ruling led to an active civil rights movement; Court ruling increased racial tensions because many whites opposed the Court ruling
- Supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details, e.g., *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*: “separate but equal doctrine”; Jim Crow laws; segregation; integration of public schools was required
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

Score of 3:

- Develops **all** components of the task with little depth *or* develops **at least four** components of the task in some depth
- Is more descriptive than analytical (applies, may analyze, and/or evaluates information), e.g., *Henry Ford’s use of the assembly line*: mass production lowered the cost of automobiles; led to the growth of related industries such as gas stations, hotels, and restaurants; *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution*: as United States military involvement in Vietnam increased, President Lyndon Johnson’s popularity decreased; the increased use of the draft led to antiwar protests in the United States
- Includes some relevant facts, examples, and details, e.g., *Henry Ford’s use of the assembly line*: each worker did a specific task in the making of the product; prior to this, things were made by hand; *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution*: containment; attack on United States naval vessel; escalation of the war; 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** components of the task *or* develops **at least three** components of the task in some depth
- Is primarily descriptive; may include faulty, weak, or isolated application or analysis
- 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

Turning Points

In the United States history, there have been several turning points that have had profound economic, political, and social effects on the nation. Two of these turning points include the Progressive Era in the early twentieth century and the New Deal under President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the United States was undergoing a rapid ~~to~~ urbanization process that brought about the Progressive Era. The farmers and immigrants were attracted to the lure of the cities and the steady factory jobs rumored to be found within those cities. The influx of emigrating people caused massive overcrowding, especially in slum areas. It was not uncommon to find four to six families living in a single apartment that had no indoor plumbing, heat, electricity, or proper fire escapes. Responding to the plight of the urban masses were the political bosses, such as Boss Tweed of New York City. He promised to provide incoming immigrants with food, clothing, shelter, and other provisions and necessities in return for their support of his policies and hand-picked leaders at the voting booth. Muckrakers such as Jacob Riis, who wrote How the Other Half Lives, to describe the slums, and Lincoln Steffens, who wrote "The Shame of the Cities" to describe the corruption and power of political bosses, soon exposed urban conditions to demand for reform at the municipal and

national levels to correct the ills of society.

The cries of outrage that resounded from ~~muckrakers~~^{muckrakers} and other progressives resulted in profound political and economical change that drastically altered American society. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, most cities had adopted measures that increased the political power of the urban dweller – a key goal of Progressive reformers. These included the initiative, a right that allowed voters to propose legislation directly to city lawmakers, the referendum, a right that allowed voters to vote on legislation directly, the recall, the right that allowed voters to remove a corrupt official from office before the term had ended; and the secret ballot, the right of the voters to cast their votes behind the curtain. The effects of the increase in popular participation in government were soon evident at the national level. In 1903 and 1906 President Theodore Roosevelt convinced congress to pass the Elkins Act and the Hepburn Act respectively to help regulate big business. Average Americans applauded these Progressive reforms that gave the I.C.C. greater power to regulate the railroad industry. Then in 1913, the 17th amendment was passed and ratified by the necessary number of states, giving states' citizens the right to choose their senators directly. Thus, the Progressive Era was a significant turning point in American history because it returned political power and influence back to average citizens.

F. D. R.'s New Deal was a radical turning point in American history because it marked the beginning of greater governmental involvement in the lives of everyday citizens. Created out of the need to resolve unemployment and poverty resulting from the Great Depression, which was caused by the overspeculation of stocks and excessive buying on credit, the New Deal first took shape during the hundred days of Congress at the beginning of F. D. R.'s term in 1933. During this time period F. D. R. helped push a number of bills through Congress to help alleviate unemployment. Some of the agencies created under F. D. R.'s administration of the New Deal were P. W. A. (Public Works Administration) and the T. V. A. (^{Tennessee}~~Texas~~ Valley Authority). The P. W. A. provided work for the jobless in the form of public works projects, while the T. V. A. provided for the public ownership of lands so that dams could be built and power provided for the region. As evidence of the endurance of the New Deal, the T. V. A. still exists today and F. D. R.'s spirit of promoting public welfare has become a cornerstone of the modern democratic platform.

Further evidence of continuing influence of the New Deal can be seen in Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty in programs like Medicare, HUD, and Headstart. The current debate over national health insurance demonstrates ^{that} the people still look to the government to care for their basic needs.

Anchor Paper – Thematic Essay—Level 5 – A

The Progressive Era and the New Deal were major turning points in U.S. history. Each grew out of economic problems that average citizens were unable to remedy.

Anchor Level 5-A

The response:

- Thoroughly develops all aspects of the task evenly and in depth by discussing the Progressive Era and the New Deal
- Is more analytical than descriptive (*Progressive Era*: the United States was undergoing a rapid urbanization process that brought about the Progressive Era; the influx of immigrating people caused massive overcrowding, especially in the slum areas; the cries of outrage that resounded from muckrakers and other Progressives resulted in profound political and economical changes that drastically altered American society; most cities had adopted measures that increased the political power of the urban dwellers—a key goal of Progressive reformers; the effects of the increase in popular participation in government were soon evident at the national level; average Americans applauded these Progressive reforms; *New Deal*: marked the beginning of greater governmental involvement in the lives of everyday citizens; created out of the need to resolve unemployment and poverty resulting from the Great Depression; as evidence of the endurance of the New Deal, the TVA still exists today and FDR’s spirit of promoting public welfare has become a cornerstone of the modern Democratic platform; the continuing influence of the New Deal can be seen in Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty programs; the current debate over national health insurance demonstrates that people still look to the government to care for their basic needs)
- Richly supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details (*Progressive Era*: late 19th and early 20th centuries; farmers and immigrants attracted to the lure of the cities and the steady factory jobs; no indoor plumbing, heat, electricity, or proper fire escapes; political bosses such as Boss Tweed of New York City; muckrakers such as Jacob Riis who wrote *How the Other Half Lives*, and Lincoln Steffens who wrote *The Shame of the Cities*; initiative, referendum, recall, and the secret ballot; President Theodore Roosevelt; Elkins Act and the Hepburn Act; ICC; 17th amendment giving states’ citizens the right to choose their senators directly; *New Deal*: President Franklin D. Roosevelt; overspeculation of stocks and excessive buying on credit; the hundred days of Congress; PWA, TVA; work for the jobless in the form of public works projects; public ownership of lands so that dams could be built and power provided for the region; Medicare, HUD, Head Start); contains a minor inaccuracy (FDR’s term began in 1932)
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction that restates the theme and a conclusion that goes a bit beyond a restatement

Conclusion: Overall, the response fits the criteria for Level 5. Despite the lack of an in-depth introduction and conclusion, this response includes an extensive amount of analysis and accurate, relevant information for a thorough discussion of different periods of reform in United States history.