

**United States History and Government**  
**Content-Specific Rubric**  
**Thematic Essay**  
**August 2007**

**Theme: Contributions of Individuals to American Life**

Throughout the 20th century, individuals attempted to address problems within American society. Their efforts have had a significant impact on American life.

**Task:** Identify *two* individuals who have had a significant impact on American life during the 20th century and for *each*

- Describe a problem in American society that the individual tried to change
- Discuss an important contribution made by the individual to address this problem
- Evaluate the impact of the contribution on American life

You may use any historically significant individual from your study of 20th-century United States history. Some suggestions you might wish to consider include Upton Sinclair, Henry Ford, Langston Hughes, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jackie Robinson, Martin Luther King, Jr., Betty Friedan, Rachel Carson, Cesar Chavez, and Bill Gates.

**Scoring Notes:**

1. This thematic essay has a minimum of *six* components (identifying *two* individuals, describing a problem associated with *each* individual, discussing an important contribution made by *each* individual to address the problem, and evaluating the impact of the contribution of *each* individual on American life during the 20th century).
2. The identified individuals should be of historical significance and not of personal significance.
3. The same problem may be discussed for both individuals but should focus on the specific contribution of each individual in ending the problem, e.g., the roles of Martin Luther King, Jr., and of Rosa Parks in ending the segregation of African Americans.
4. The impact on American life should be during the 20th century, although the contribution may have been before the 20th century, e.g., Susan B. Anthony and her impact on the success of the woman's suffrage movement with the passage of the 19th amendment.
5. The contribution and the impact of the contribution must be related to the problem that the individual tried to change.
6. As is the case with many historical topics, the impact of the contribution on American life is subject to the student's point of view. The response may evaluate the impact of the contribution from a variety of perspectives as long as the position taken is supported by accurate facts and examples.
7. The impact of the contribution of the individual should be on American life, not on the world in general or on another nation, i.e., Eleanor Roosevelt and the impact of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights on Cambodians is not acceptable.
8. Elected government officials may be considered significant individuals, e.g., a United States President such as Franklin D. Roosevelt.

**Score of 5:**

- Thoroughly develops **all** aspects of the task evenly and in depth by identifying **two** individuals, describing a problem associated with **each** individual, discussing an important contribution made by **each** individual to address the problem, and evaluating the impact of the contribution of **each** individual on American life during the 20th century
- Is more analytical than descriptive (analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information) (*Martin Luther King, Jr.*: connects the inequalities African Americans were subjected to after World War II to the steps King advocated to correct the practice of segregation and to the success of removing Jim Crow laws; connects African American economic power to success in the confrontations with institutions such as the bus companies in Montgomery and “whites only” restaurants; *Upton Sinclair*: links the increased awareness about the problems with the meatpacking industry, depicted in *The Jungle* to the passage of the Meat Inspection Act; connects the rise of labor unions and the improvement in worker’s rights to the exposure of conditions by muckrakers like Sinclair)
- Richly supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details (*Martin Luther King, Jr.*: Montgomery bus boycott; sit-ins; nonviolent demonstrations; I Have a Dream speech; Civil Rights Act of 1964; *Upton Sinclair*: Theodore Roosevelt; rats; repetitive jobs; unsanitary conditions; Meat Inspection Act; Pure Food and Drug Act)
- 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 but may do so somewhat unevenly by discussing one aspect of the task less thoroughly than the others for both individuals *or* by addressing all aspects of the task for one individual more thoroughly than for the second individual
- Is both descriptive and analytical (applies, analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information) (*Martin Luther King, Jr.*: discusses the economic loss to the bus companies as a result of the boycott; discusses the methods used to keep African Americans from being equal and those used by King to change this inequity; *Upton Sinclair*: describes the unsanitary conditions and corrupt practices in the meatpacking industry; discusses the effect of the publication of *The Jungle* and its impact on subsequent legislation; discusses other businesses, such as Standard Oil, that were corrupt and dirty and the way Sinclair’s novel had an impact on changing those problems)
- 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

### Score of 3:

- Develops **all** aspects of the task with little depth *or* develops **at least four** components of the task in some depth
- Is more descriptive than analytical (apply, may analyze, and/or evaluates information)
- 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

### Examples of addressing **at least four** aspects of the task in some depth at Level 3

*Holistic Scoring Reminder:* These examples apply only to the evaluation of bullet 1.  
A response meeting the criteria below does not, by itself, make it a Level 3 response.

1. Develops **all** aspects of the task with some depth for *one* individual and only **one** aspect for the *second* individual.
2. Develops any **two** aspects of the task with some depth for *both* individuals.

**Exception:** If **all** components have been thoroughly developed evenly and in depth for *one* individual 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
- 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

### Examples of addressing **at least three** aspects of the task in some depth at Level 2

*Holistic Scoring Reminder:* These examples apply only to the evaluation of bullet 1.  
A response meeting the criteria below does not, by itself, make it a Level 2 response.

1. Develops **all** aspects of the task in some depth for only *one* individual.
2. Develops any **two** aspects of the task in some depth for *one* individual and only **one** aspect of the task for the *second* individual.

### 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

During the 20th century, there were many individuals who fought to overcome some of the hard ships of society. Through writing The Jungle, Upton Sinclair had a drastic impact on the meat-packing industry. Likewise, Martin Luther King Jr.'s civil rights efforts are still felt strongly in today's society. These individuals worked hard and made a valiant effort to bring about change in the United States during the 20th century.

In the 20th century, the conditions of the meat-packing industries were terrible. Workers had poor conditions and the meat was terrible. The conditions were unsanitary, and a lot of the meat wasn't either. Upton Sinclair decided to write a novel to uncover the truth about the industry. He called it The Jungle. It was a very graphic novel about exactly what went on in the industry. It exposed the horrible truth about what occurred in the meat-packing industry. This novel was read by many people, and it raised awareness as well. One person who read the novel was Theodore Roosevelt. He had felt the impact of the industry on a very personal level. When he fought in the Spanish-American War, he often received meat that was so bad it could not be eaten. After reading The Jungle, Theodore Roosevelt went to work to improve the industry. Others became involved as well, and soon much legislation was passed, including the creation of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Pure Food and Drug Act, and the Meat Inspection Act. They wanted to ensure that the meat-packing industry could not continue selling bad and spoiled meat to unknowing customers. The efforts made by Upton Sinclair when he wrote The Jungle can still be felt today. Thanks to his work, all meat must now be inspected,

guaranteeing consumers a safe and fresh product.

Someone else who has a great impact through his work in the 20th century was Martin Luther King Jr. He was a Baptist Minister, and he fought hard for the civil rights movement. He joined the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) to protest the prejudices and segregation which were very prominent in society at the time. He felt that segregation was wrong because all races are created equal, and so they should have equal rights as well. African Americans were terribly discriminated against, especially in the South. Through countless rallies, marches, and demonstrations, he helped fight for the improved status of African Americans. He also inspired others, like Malcolm X and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), who were fighting for his same cause. However, they used different methods to draw attention to the problems of segregation. People rallied behind him because he was fighting for a cause they could all identify with. His most famous speech was his "I Have a Dream" speech in which he spoke of his dream that one day his children could share a school with white children. It was inspirational and had a huge impact on the civil rights movement.

Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated by someone who opposed his ideas, but those ideas would survive long after his death. Through his work, and the work of those who rallied behind his cause, legislation was passed, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which outlawed segregation and guaranteed equal voting rights for African Americans. His impact is still felt in the equality now present in the

United States between all races:

All throughout the 20th century, there have been individuals who stood up and fought against some kind of injustices. Some of these causes were very different (like fighting the meatpacking industry as opposed to fighting for racial equality) but these individuals all had one thing in common: they fought all kinds of injustices and left this nation with a lasting impact that can still be felt in today's society.

#### Anchor Level 5-A

##### The response:

- Thoroughly develops all aspects of the task evenly and in depth for Upton Sinclair and Martin Luther King, Jr., by describing a problem in American society that these individuals, who had a significant impact on American life during the 20th century, tried to change, discussing an important contribution made by each individual to address this problem, and evaluating the impact of each contribution on American life
- Is more analytical than descriptive (*Upton Sinclair*: the conditions weren't sanitary and a lot of the meat wasn't either; *The Jungle* was a very graphic novel about exactly what went on in the industry; they wanted to ensure that the meatpacking industry could not continue selling bad and spoiled meat to unknowing consumers; *M. L. King*: African Americans were terribly discriminated against, especially in the South; segregation was wrong because all races are created equal and should have equal rights; "I Have a Dream" speech was inspirational and had a huge impact on the civil rights movement)
- Richly supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details (*Upton Sinclair*: Theodore Roosevelt; Food and Drug Administration; Pure Food and Drug Act; Meat Inspection Act; *M. L. King*: Baptist minister; SCLC; rallies, marches, demonstrations; SNCC; Civil Rights Act; Voting Rights Act)
- Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

**Conclusion:** Overall, the response fits the criteria for Level 5. The response contains the amount and degree of analysis that is usually found in a Level 5 response. This response demonstrates a good understanding of the lasting impact of these individuals on American life.