

# The World History Course and Examination

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The study of world history is a daunting task. So much has happened in the past that it seems almost impossible to know where or how to begin. Indeed, world history courses vary widely from one high school to the next, making the situation even more challenging. After a long discussion among history scholars on both the university and secondary levels, the Advanced Placement Program has managed to put in place a curriculum that is comprehensive both in its world coverage and time sequence. An early word of caution to students taking the exam is to pay close attention to the guidelines provided by the College Board that are followed in this study book. Many textbooks and secondary courses on “world history” still emphasize the history of the west and do not focus on the themes outlined in the AP curriculum. While the education they provide may be sound, they will not necessarily prepare you for the exam.

The pages that follow include a description of the course, the broad themes that it follows, the “habits of mind” that it requires, and something about the examination itself. Read through this part very carefully because it will provide you with an overview of the course that will help keep you from getting lost in the complexities and challenges that the study of world history always presents.

## A DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE

Does history seem like just one fact after another to you? If so, you need to reconsider the way that you view it. The AP World History course does not expect you to know a lot of details. However, the curriculum does require you to make connections between broad, sweeping patterns in history and the particular events that occur in specific cultures. For example, you may know that Christopher Columbus sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in 1492, and that his ships were the Santa Maria, the Nina, and the Pinto. What if you forget the name of one of the ships? The AP World History curriculum doesn’t mind, but what you do need to understand is that Columbus’ voyage was an early example of a massive movement of Europeans to the “New World” that resulted in a major turning point in world history. You need to know something about the forces that converged to make his voyage possible and the consequences it had on *world* history, not just the United States. And then, you might want to compare the consequences of his voyage to those of the Chinese explorer, Zheng He. So if you don’t already think of history in these terms, begin to change your perspective right now.

## GOALS

In a nutshell, the goals of the course include:

1. **To develop an understanding of the *story of history*** – History has evolved over eons of time. Any event must be placed in the sequence of the story and cannot be understood without knowing what happened earlier. How did the Romans develop Latin, a language that came to be the root for many modern languages today? Their accomplishment rested on the knowledge and skills of earlier civilizations, and their language was also a part of the broader Roman culture. Once the language spread to other areas, its influence broadened and outlived the empire that created it. The development and influence of Latin is part of the broader story of human development of written language in all of its many forms.
2. **To focus on interactions among human societies** – Studying one country, kingdom, empire, or area in particular is fine, but the focus of AP World History is on interactions among societies. For example, the religion of Islam started in the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century C.E. It greatly impacted the lives of the Bedouins and the other Arabian groups that first encountered it. However, the spread of Islam to other areas is a much more significant event in terms of impact on world history. In some places, such as India, the introduction of Islam sparked conflict that resonates through time and has led to violence in the modern world. In other areas, such as northern Africa, Islam spread slowly, encompassing local traditions, so that the religion itself was transformed. In both cases, you should notice that the focus is on *interaction* among societies, not on one society in isolation.
3. **To interpret history in terms of historical evidence** – We know what happened in the past because someone somehow passed knowledge down from one generation to the next. Usually knowledge is transmitted through writing, but oral traditions also may be important methods of transfer. We also may learn about history by looking at cultural objects that have survived through the years. Many pieces of history obviously are lost, and we are left with only those that filter their way through time. As a result, we must reconstruct the past based on imperfect relics and accounts. Historians must be sleuths as they investigate such questions as these: Who said it? When? Why? What point of view did the person have, and can I find another piece of evidence that either agrees or disagrees with it?

4. **To understand the nature of change over time** – We know that the world changed a great deal between 1900 and 2000 C.E. But how and why? Did it happen through violent, sudden actions, like invasions or strikes, or did change slowly evolve? The nature of change is important to investigate because it is part of the broad story of history. Changes that start in one area – like technology – may cause change in other areas, such as government, the economy, and/or family life. Tracing and analyzing the thread of change through time is an important focus of the AP World History course.
5. **To make comparisons among major societies** – The human story can best be understood by comparing similar events, trends, customs, or influences in different parts of the world. The Incas managed to raise food for an empire in an inauspicious mountain environment, whereas the Aztecs were able to do the same thing in the middle of a swamp. Their different environments led to similar outcomes, but they did it through different farming techniques and they produced both different and similar crops. Those comparisons help us to understand the broader accomplishments and challenges of both civilizations.

## THEMES

These goals may be translated into several themes that the course follows. You should be able to see them in every era in every part of the world and make connections over all eras of time and from civilization to civilization.

1. **patterns and impacts of interactions among societies** – These interactions may take the form of trade, war, or diplomacy, and they may also include the involvement of international organizations.
2. **relationships between change and continuity over time** – Change is sometimes easier to see than continuity, but they are always interrelated. What stays the same, and why, especially when other things change? For example, customs may stay the same even though environments and/or technology changes.
3. **the impact of technology and demography** – Technology includes inventions from the wheel to computer science, and demography is the study of people and their relationship to the environment. Demography includes migration, population increase or decrease, disease, and agriculture.
4. **systems of social structure and gender structure** – These include a study of social statuses and class, as well as differing statuses of and division of labor between men and women. The course traces changes in these areas over time, and invites students to make comparisons among societies.

5. **cultural and intellectual developments and interactions** – This theme includes belief systems, such as philosophies and religions, as well as arts and literature. It emphasizes the impact of these developments across civilizations and through time.
6. **changes in functions and structures of governments and attitudes toward them** – Governments have always existed in human society, but they have taken many different shapes and have performed various functions. People have always expected something of government, but those expectations have changed over time as well.

## HABITS OF MIND

History scholars must develop a set of skills that are necessary to develop in order to understand the major themes. The AP curriculum refers to these skills as “Habits of Mind” that may be divided into two categories:

### 1. Habits of Mind for the study of any history:

- building and evaluating arguments based on evidence
- using documents and other primary data to understand history; analyzing bias, point of view, and context
- assessing change and continuity over time
- handling diverse interpretations of similar phenomena through interpreting bias, point of view, and context

### 2. Habits of Mind for studying World History:

- seeing and understanding global patterns, yet connecting them to local specific events in particular places
- comparing within and among societies, including comparisons of different or similar reactions to global processes
- developing historical understanding by assessing claims of universal standards, while noting commonalities and differences; putting cultural diversities within historical context

The AP World History Examination assesses both content and habits of mind in all types of questions, both multiple choice and essay.

## THE TIME PERIODS

The course encompasses five eras in time beginning in 8000 B.C.E. and extending to the present. B.C.E. (before the common era) is the same thing as B.C. (before Christ), and C.E. (the common era) corresponds to A.D. (anno Domini). The time periods and their percentages on the examination are as follows:

<b>Foundations (8000 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.)</b>	19-20%
<b>600 -1450 C.E.</b>	22%
<b>1450 -1750 C.E.</b>	19-20%
<b>1750 -1914 C.E.</b>	19-20%
<b>1914 -Present</b>	19-20%

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PERIODIZATION

**Periodization** is the process of dividing history into manageable “chunks” so as to avoid the pitfall of thinking about history as just one fact after another. It may apply to any period of time, long, in-between, or relatively short. For example, you may periodize your life so far by creating categories that describe your life during a particular period, like “when I lived in Denver,” or “when I was in elementary school.” On reflection, you can see change and continuity, and most of us can see distinct eras. United States history may be periodized as well into chunks like “the Revolutionary Era,” or “the Industrial Revolution.” In all cases, particular events, trends, and/or people characterize the era and make it distinct from other eras. Sometimes eras end and new ones begin with “**Marker Events**” that produce many important changes, such as the Civil War in U.S. history. Other times the change is more gradual, but is apparent, especially in hindsight.

Of course, world history is much more difficult to periodize than an individual’s life or one country’s history. Breaking down thousands of years into chunks is a very challenging task, especially when you must consider *all* civilizations in every corner of the globe. However, world historians have attempted to do just that. As you can imagine, they don’t always agree with one another, but the AP World History curriculum is based on periodization into the five eras: Foundations, 600-1450, 1450-1750, 1750-1914, and 1914 to the present. Even though they are all part of the long story of history, each era is different from the others. In a way, periodization is something of a mind trick that allows us to find order in the myriad of events, people, and societies that have existed in all of human history.

# Sample Examination I

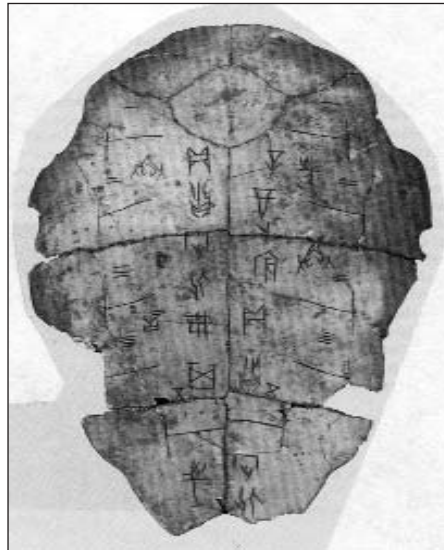
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**This section should be completed in 55 minutes.**

**Directions:** Each of the questions or incomplete statements is followed by five suggested answers or completions. Select the one that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. All of the following are geographical characteristics that isolated the development of early Chinese civilization EXCEPT:
  - (A) The Gobi Desert was north of Ancient China.
  - (B) The deserts of the Xinjiang lay to the west of Ancient China.
  - (C) The great east/west rivers of Ancient China were not navigable.
  - (D) The Himalayas lay to the southwest, blocking China from other early civilizations.
  - (E) The vast Pacific Ocean lay to the east of Ancient China.
  
2. Which of the following is NOT true of the major Amerindian civilizations in Central and South America prior to the arrival of Europeans?
  - (A) Their economies were based primarily on trade.
  - (B) They constructed monumental buildings.
  - (C) They had major urban centers.
  - (D) They had differentiation of labor.
  - (E) They had social classes.
  
3. "Pax Mongolica" is a reference to the
  - (A) disruption caused by Muslim invasions all across Eurasia
  - (B) disease that spread along the trade routes protected by Mongols
  - (C) land controlled by the Great Khan
  - (D) peace brought about by Mongol rule across Eurasia
  - (E) tax farming practices of the Mongols

4. Which of the following did Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela have in common?
- (A) They practiced non-violence to relieve oppression of the groups they represented.
  - (B) They led equality movements in the United States during the 20th century.
  - (C) They led independence movements during the 20th century.
  - (D) They were religious leaders before they were political leaders.
  - (E) None ever held formal political leadership positions in their respective countries.



*Bulliet, Richard. The Earth and its Peoples, Second Edition. Copyright © 2001 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Used with permission.*

5. The tortoise shell pictured above was used in Ancient China for what purpose?
- (A) to teach children Confucian sayings
  - (B) to designate social class
  - (C) to communicate with the ancestors
  - (D) to record agricultural production
  - (E) to map directions to various places in China
6. During which era in world history was a sharp divide created between “have” and “have not” countries by industrialization?
- (A) 200 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.
  - (B) 600 C.E. to 1450 C.E.
  - (C) 1450 to 1750 C.E.
  - (D) 1750-1914 C.E.
  - (E) 1914-Present C.E.

7. “Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vishnuiyas, Shudras” are examples of different
- (A) types of Buddhist monks
  - (B) Indian gods
  - (C) areas conquered by the Romans
  - (D) early Indian castes
  - (E) aspects of a single Indian god as represented by the arms
8. Which of the following best describes both the Abbasid Caliphate and Europe during the late 1st millennium?
- (A) Both were united under strong central governments.
  - (B) Both had many characteristics of advanced levels of civilization.
  - (C) Both were united by strong religious organization.
  - (D) Neither had strong religious or political organizations.
  - (E) In both areas, Jews generally were considered to be inferior to polytheistic people.
9. Which of the following was a characteristic of the time period 1750-1914 that distinguished it from others as a distinct period in world history?
- (A) European dominance globally of long-distance trade
  - (B) the democratic transition
  - (C) the eastern hemisphere’s first contact with the western hemisphere
  - (D) Islam’s emergence as the largest religion in the world
  - (E) slavery as the dominant labor system for most western societies
10. All of the following were significant differences between North American and Latin American colonies EXCEPT:
- (A) North American colonies depended more heavily on slave labor than did Latin American colonies.
  - (B) Many North American colonies were established by joint stock companies; Latin American colonies were established by Spanish and Portuguese governments.
  - (C) Gold and silver were more important to the overall economy of Latin America.
  - (D) Latin American colonies employed the mita and encomienda labor systems; North American colonies did not.
  - (E) The government structures of Latin American colonies were less likely to incorporate ideas of self-government into their political systems.

11. During the time period from 600 to 1200 C.E., in which part of the world did women have the right to own property and to divorce their husbands?
- (A) western Europe
  - (B) Tang/Song China
  - (C) Muslim lands of Southwest Asia
  - (D) India
  - (E) Western Africa

(Questions 12 and 13 refer to the following engraving)”



*General Research Division  
The New York Public Library  
Astor Lenox and Tilden Foundations*

12. The woman in the engraving is
- (A) sacrificing herself to the gods in order to bring good fortune to her people
  - (B) following societal expectations that a widow jump into her husband's funeral pyre
  - (C) acknowledging European dominance of her country by following rules set by an imperialist country
  - (D) demonstrating her ability to survive a death by fire
  - (E) taking part in a ceremony meant to pay honor to European visitors

# UNIT ONE

## Foundations (8000 B.C.E.-600 C.E.)

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1. **D** – The Neolithic Revolution was an important Marker Event in world history that brought many changes, but it did not bring about equal status for men and women. In fact, it had the opposite effect. Scholars theorize that the widening of the status gap between men and women was the result of men gaining control of the most vital functions that kept agricultural societies going: cultivation of crops and domestication of animals. In hunter and gatherer societies, men hunted and women gathered, so each had important functions. Once people settled into communities and agricultural surplus became possible, women could and did have more children. Added nutrition meant that more children survived, and more hands were needed to bring in bigger yields of crops, so people were motivated to have more children. Women, then, became more preoccupied with childcare and less able to cultivate crops and domesticate animals.
2. **C** – Women in hunting and gathering societies almost certainly became the experts on edible plants and their habitats because they were the ones doing most of the gathering. This information was vital for the survival of the group, so older women taught their skills to younger women, and both retained relatively equal status to men. This knowledge was essential to early agriculturalists as they experimented with cultivation. However, once cultivation became established, lifestyles for both men and women changed, and the equality gap grew.
3. **B** – Traditionally, many historians have treated the advent of civilization as a giant step forward in the development of human societies. They have emphasized the advantages of civilization – the ability to build big cities, understand mathematical and scientific principles, and coordinate large armies and empires. Early on, settled people came to see their way of life as superior, and the nomads (hunters and gatherers) were often disdained as pesky and even dangerous. However, in recent years many historians have shifted their attentions to the roles that nomadic people have played in the course of history, and now caution us to pay attention to people that lived outside the major civilization areas. Only by considering them together may we get an accurate picture of the past.

4. **A** – The Chavin were one of the earliest people to occupy the area of the Andes Mountains in South America. They originated in present-day Peru, and their environment was truly unique among ancient civilizations. They lived along a narrow sea coast, in mountain valleys of the Andes, and also in the jungle that begins just east of the mountains. Remarkably, other groups followed them, and the area later gave rise to the great Inca civilization that also thrived in all three climate/topography areas.
5. **B** – Early Mesopotamia and Egypt had many things in common. They both originated in river valleys, and they both had sophisticated irrigation systems. They also conducted long distance trade and built great cities. However, their government structures were quite different. Mesopotamia developed a number of city-states, with each city governing the countryside around it. However, the city states were often in conflict with one another, and each had to defend itself from frequent invaders from outside the area. Egypt, on the other hand, developed a strong, centralized government headed by a pharaoh that was believed to be a god. Even though each region of Egypt had its own governor, the governors were part of a large bureaucracy that owed allegiance to the pharaoh.
6. **A** – The emperor of Zhou China was believed to be the “son of heaven,” or the ruler designated by the “heavens” as the true and rightful leader. This belief combined with the early emphasis on reverence for ancestors, so the “mandate of heaven” may also be interpreted as a sign from those who had died who had much greater wisdom than people still on earth. So the Chinese emperor was not really viewed as a “god,” but as someone who claimed the throne rightfully according to a higher authority. The mandate could be lost if a ruler was not a principled guardian of his people, proving that the “heavens” were always watching and guiding China.
7. **E** – All three early river valley civilizations had these four characteristics. Mesopotamian writing was cuneiform, Egyptians had hieroglyphics, and the Indus Valley people had a language that has only recently become decipherable. All climates were relatively dry, so their agriculture depended on extensive irrigation of water from the rivers. Flood control was a major concern of all, although the Egyptians could usually count on regular, predictable flooding, which made their job a little easier. Before 1200 BCE all traded with one another, and the Indus Valley people probably also traded with China.

8. **E** – Xi’an was the capital city of Han China, and although the forbidden city where the emperor lived was later moved to Beijing, it almost certainly originated in Xi’an. The diagram has others clues that identify it as ancient China. For example, it shows “scholar gentry” residences, early evidence of China’s emphasis on scholarship for its bureaucrats. Government officials were expected to know philosophy, particularly Confucianism, and tough civil service exams were administered to candidates for selection to government positions.
9. **A** – The Chinese emperor was not seen as a god, but his status as the “son of heaven,” or the one designated by the heavens as the rightful ruler, is reflected in the style of his residence. The emperor could and did travel outside his compound, but only a select few were allowed to enter the forbidden city. Confucianism reinforced the emperor’s authority by emphasizing obedience and hierarchical order.
10. **C** – On the contrary, inequality tended to increase with the development of civilization. One important reason is that jobs became specialized, so that everyone didn’t do the same thing anymore, as they had in hunter and gatherer societies. Some people became artisans, others builders and architects, and still others rulers and priests. Status differences came to reflect the society’s values, as well as skill levels necessary to do the various jobs.
11. **E** – Confucius lived during the Warring States Period between the Zhou and Han Dynasties, a time of political chaos. His philosophy reflected the need to restore order and peace. His vision for the ideal society was one that was hierarchical, with some having authority, and others obeying their superiors. He emphasized harmony within relationships, particularly those in the family.
12. **D** – The era around 1200 BCE saw the decline or collapse of most civilizations in Western Asia, Egypt, the eastern Mediterranean, and the Indus Valley. The Hittites lost their control of Anatolia, or modern-day Turkey, and a series of invasions so weakened Egypt that the government lost control of its Nubian lands to the south. The Mycenaeans, or early Greeks, also lost control of mainland Greece, as well as islands in the Aegean Sea. Outside attackers also sacked trade cities in Western Asia. The only area that did not see significant decline was China, where the Shang Dynasty continued to rule.